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The Past as “Ahead”:
A Circular History of Modern Chamorro Activism

Gabrielle Lynn Lupola

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in History at Pomona College.



23 April 2021

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Land Acknowledgment

Before embarking on this academic exploration, I wanted to impart a few words. Although born on my home island of Guåhan (which is referred to as Guam throughout this project due to its familiarity amongst non-Chamorros and for consistency's sake), I was primarily raised on Turtle Island. Commonly referred to as the continental United States, Turtle Island comprises vast and diverse geographies full of Native peoples with their own distinctive ways of knowing and being. Just as using the term "Pacific Islander" is reductive of the countless identities and histories of Oceania, "Native American" is another blanket term which does not do the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island justice. Because I am based in Southern California, I will be speaking directly to and about those who are Native to the lands I was once hosted on and currently hosted on. In evoking the terms "Indigenous" or "Native" regarding people, I mean those who have genealogical ties to the land and an inherent responsibility to care for the land as it cares for them. Because of this, Native peoples are traditional stewards of the land they come from; due to this relationship, Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and protocol regarding their respective, traditional lands should be recognized and protected.

Having grown up and returned to my hometown of Oceanside, California during the pandemic, I acknowledge the Payómkawichum/Luiseño and Kumeyaay Nations as traditional stewards of this land. Throughout my upbringing here, I was able to create a home away from home with my family because of our proximity to the Pacific Ocean. I thank the land and waters for treating me well. By attending the Claremont Colleges, I acknowledge the Tongva/Gabrieliño Nation as the traditional stewards of a territory stretching from Catalina Island to the Inland Empire. My time here taught me invaluable lessons on how to engage in respectful protocol and reciprocal relations with the land itself and its Native peoples; I am grateful to have received this wisdom in the way I did. I also want to acknowledge the recent passing of two strong Tongva elders, Barbara Drake and Julia Bogany, who were generous enough to share their lived and learned experiences with everyone at the Claremont Colleges. Your legacy will live on with so many inspired individuals, including myself. Si yu'us ma'åse' for everything you gifted this world with your generous hearts. In offering this land acknowledgement, I want to recognize that these Indigenous peoples have called their respective territories home since time immemorial and continue to do so to this day. They did not willingly give up their rights or access to land but were forcibly deprived of this stewardship. From a broadly Indigenous worldview, one cannot own land; one belongs to the land the same way it belongs to a community. Instead of viewing the land as something to possess, something to extract from, something to take and take and take from, it should instead be viewed for the wondrous gift and bearer of life that it is. In recognizing these Indigenous peoples, I seek their sovereignty and solidarity. I envision a future in which they are in charge of their own destinies the same way I champion Chamorro sovereignty. In demanding "land back," Indigenous communities do not mean the immediate eviction of settlers but rather that we return to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, Indigenous ways of loving and respecting the land, and enacting those same relationships with each other: compassion, cooperation, and radical optimism. As someone Indigenous to another place, I recognize my current positionality as a settler, and thank you for hosting me.

I dedicate this to my angels up in heaven:

Papa Joe, Grandpa Mike, Grandma Diane, Uncle Joey, Niki, Zach, & others in my family

I also dedicate this thesis to those who lost their lives to COVID-19, police brutality, gun violence, racism, and other preventable causes, may they rest in peace.

To these young, beautiful souls taken well before their time amongst many others:

Adam Toledo (13 years old), a Latino boy killed by a cop in Chicago, IL

Daunte Wright (20 years old), a Black man killed by a cop in Brooklyn Center, MN

Iremamber Sykap (16 years old), a Micronesian boy killed by a cop in Honolulu, HI

Ma'Khia Bryant (16 years old), a Black girl killed by a cop in Columbus, OH

May we dream up new worlds in which the land is returned, our relatives can live to be old, our young ones can play and just be children, and we do not have to fight for our humanity to be recognized.

Introduction:
Conceptualizations of the Past and Present:
A Prelude to Unpacking the Long-Winded History of Guam's Political Status

It is October 2020, and COVID restrictions in California have lifted just enough for my sister to start up soccer practice again, this time socially distanced. With truly nothing better to do, I join my mom for a car ride to escape the house. As we patiently wait for the practice to end, I scribble painful attempts at opening anecdotes for what feels like eternity; suddenly, a thought occurs. For months on end, I had been diligently researching, intentionally writing, and selectively combing my own collected materials for this very project. Besides my lovely thesis readers, fellow history majors, and my email correspondence with Saina Hope Cristobal, I kept my thesis work within this virtual realm as well as a self-imposed, quasi-isolated state. Sitting in the passenger seat with writer's block that late October afternoon, it finally occurred to me that I should once again employ my oral history skills and gain the insight of my mother. For her, it was just another day of Gabby being inquisitive about growing up on Guam. For me, she was the perfect interviewee. Both captive and candid, she had time to kill and experiences to share.

As a Chamorro teenager of the 1990's, her mentality regarding U.S. military presence on island went as follows: "that sucks because they're here on my island, but it didn't affect my daily life... it is what it is."¹ Frank in her ambivalence, this disparate but dual tone of resentment and acceptance reminded me of a conversation I had with her mom, my Grandma Chris, a year earlier. Reminiscing on her favorite pastime, dry humor, Grandma Chris shared this tidbit through intermittent chuckles: "I joke all the time, my

¹ Christina Lupola, interview conducted by author, Oceanside, 29th October, 2020.

friends will get upset with me, and I say, ‘What is your problem my darling? You don’t own the island; you’re just occupying it. The United States own[s] the government’.”²

Accustomed to Guam as it is, and grateful for U.S. military presence too I might add, my maternal grandmother’s lived experience attested even more to the complicated nature of U.S.-Chamorro relations. To keep things in perspective, she not only endured the difficulties of post-World War II Guam but is still here with us in the year 2021. In contrast, all my mom knew was the Guam that was developing alongside her during the late twentieth century. Despite this generational divide, both women illustrated a tendency to simultaneously cope and critique their colonial realities upon reflection. In discussing the U.S. military industrial complex on island, they held undeniably mixed thoughts and feelings. Upon closer inspection, I believe the tension behind such statements and suppositions arose by confronting an unfair reality rooted in an unsettling history. Considering such conflicting judgements, I wondered if they could envision alternative political futures for Guam. Despite acknowledging the setbacks of U.S. influence and control on island, both mother and daughter did not favor and could not imagine Guam independent from the United States. Near, distant, you name it; conceptualizing any kind of alternative future was off the table.

For them, it seemed implausible and could prove detrimental for many reasons, including economic. Given Guam’s political status has not changed in any significant way since 1898, it is neither unreasonable nor uncommon to hold such a belief. In fact, a decent portion of friends, family, and community members interviewed for this project in

² Cresencia Castro, Interview conducted by author, Yigo, July 26th, 2019.

2019 shared similar views regarding Guam’s political future. Others, like Chamorro historians and activists, argue aspirations toward self-determination and sovereignty would prove difficult to achieve but should not be ruled out.³ In turn, I wanted to make sense of these beliefs and provide nuance to a seemingly linear history of perpetual political status. To do so, I explore the following questions: What is the history of Guam’s political status as an unincorporated territory? How did this affect its Indigenous inhabitants, their livelihoods, and local affairs throughout the 20th century? Why did activist organizations arise in the late twentieth century and what did their collective efforts achieve? What processes, peoples, and powers did they engage with to meet their goals? What was at stake for Chamorros when it comes to the island’s political status? And lastly,

why does this matter?

In pursuing this subset of my own intellectual inquiries, I wanted my capstone project to combine both the skillset and sentiment I had acquired throughout my time at Pomona. My primary motivation is to cultivate a multi-layered narrative informed by oral and archival histories, Indigenous epistemologies, and even my own positionality. As a Chamorro Italian female historian, I have no qualms in admitting my lived and learned experiences largely inform my approach as well as research interests. Imperfect as it is, I return to history again and again because of my investment in storytelling and its power to shape our realities. Bearing in mind the salient advice of Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, I recognize the imbalanced power dynamics and inherent pitfalls of

³ To learn more, see: Laura Torres Souder and Rober A. Underwood, Souder-Jaffery, Laura Marie Torres, and Robert A Underwood. 1987. *Chamorro Self-Determination : The Right of a People = I Derech on I Taotao*. Marc Education Series Publication, No. 7. Agana, Guam: Chamorro Studies Association.

history as a discipline. At the very same time, I cannot relinquish the redemptive qualities of a non-Western conception and deployment of history. Akin to the aims of other Indigenous researchers, sharing such stories brings me solace because of my own desire to “rewrite and *reright* our position in history.”⁴ Following in the footsteps of my predecessors, I hope to exercise due diligence in evoking their works and portrayal of Chamorro history as I have come to know it through my studies. As part of a growing community of Chamorro scholars, I also hope my thesis can be utilized for future generations to understand why what happened in the past not only informs our present but can help in shaping our future.

The difficulty of addressing any form of Pacific history, let alone Chamorro history, involves a necessity to rely on Western constructs of time, justice, and evidence. To the best of my abilities, I problematize these models by proposing alternatives. Instead of solely propagating the ill-made idea of history as development outlined by Smith, I reject this modernist project of linear progression as the only valid form of teleology. Rather, I also entertain the idea of ecological time as described by phenomenal Tongan scholar Epeli Hau’ofa. Circular in nature, ecological time turns Western constructs of time on its head; whereas the past is “ahead” or in front of us, the future is “behind.” To make sense of this, I offer Hau’ofa’s explanation in full:

“That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and be aware of its presence. What is behind us cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is front of our minds’ eyes, always remind us of its presence. Sine the past is alive in us, the dead are alive—we are our history.”⁵

⁴ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory,” *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012), 29.

⁵ Epeli Hau’ofa. *We are the Ocean: Selected Works*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

Such a framework supports my inclination to discuss two different eras, while decades apart, because of their interconnectedness. As both exemplify resistance to colonial subjecthood, this thesis captures a wide array of assertions to self-governance and community organizing. From reasonings behind and responses to Chamorro bereavement of rights, there is a direct line of connection between my chosen moments (1898/turn of the 20th century and the late 20th century). For the latter portion, this thesis tracks activist organizations in their chosen emphases on civil rights versus Indigenous rights, local outreach versus state recognition, and trans-Indigenous recognitions or relations. In analyzing the length to which Chamorro activists were willing to go, this thesis is not a success-oriented history. It is more concerned with laying out the context as to why Chamorros developed certain beliefs regarding Guam's political status and what methodologies they employed in hopes of enacting change. In revisiting the past, I also assert the idea of Indigenous futurisms to re-envision what history means to an Indigenous community like the Chamorros of Guam. Circling back to the tumultuous events of 1898, I incorporate a Turtle Island-based theory to inform my understanding of this critical juncture.⁶ Through this theory of Indigenous futurisms, as articulated by Anishinaabe scholar Grace L. Dillon, this narrative has the potential to inspire not only pride but political change through re-envisioning our past. Akin to its predecessor, African futurisms, Indigenous futurisms turns 1898 into a window of opportunity to reflect on what may have occurred otherwise. This theory also instills the need to imagine new possibilities for the future inspired by the past.⁷ Guided by all this brilliant

⁶ For secondary reading, see: Suzanne Newman Fricke, "Introduction: Indigenous Futurisms in the hyperpresent now," *World Art* Vol. 9, No. 2, 2019.

⁷ Grace L. Dillon, ed., *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series, Vol. 69 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

scholarship, my key intervention is to problematize Western constructs of time and highlight agency exerted by Chamorro leaders and organized bodies during this time. In contrast to Western conceptions of history as positive and progressive, I follow in the footsteps of Chamorro scholars and activists to argue there is no forward momentum without first addressing the root of the problem. From my purview, 1898 is essential to understanding the movements for Chamorro self-determination and sovereignty on Guam decades later; it is the long dormant catalyst which truly set in motion the island's enduring political status.

Lastly, the most important feature of this thesis is my incorporation of oral histories. Given my thesis readers are both heavily invested in the project of Native/Indigenous Studies, I never had to battle for the validity of oral histories as “truth,” “fact,” or “relevant” stories worth telling. Capturing personal experiences and perceptions of prior events, there is so much to be derived from oral histories. For posterity, I also think it is important to preserve our present and not so distant experiences, which over time, shall become histories themselves. In pushing fellow Pacific scholars to do so, Hau'ofa argues, “We have to bequeath to future generations more memories of our recent past and our present than we ourselves remember of our remote pasts. We must remember and reconstruct as much of our pasts as we can to present to the future.”⁸ Given the bulk of this thesis focuses on contemporary Chamorro history, I mostly utilize interview clips and personal anecdotes from documentaries, email correspondence, and interviews as well. Capturing the humanistic aspect of history,

⁸ Hau'ofa, 69.

I do what I can to sprinkle these oral histories throughout. Offering anecdotes as points of entry, each chapter begins with a snippet of my own conversations with Chamorros I interviewed. By opening with retrospective reflections of everyday people, involved in activism or otherwise, I aim to highlight the complexity of Chamorro perspectives. As a stateside Chamorro history student, I am still finding my place in this world, let alone the burgeoning field of Indigenous Studies. Doing my best to offer alternative histories and add nuance to established narratives, I offer the following stories. For the rest of this introduction, I provide holistic summaries of each chapter and their purpose.

Chapter Overview

In this preliminary chapter, I recapitulate the transfer of power over Guam between two colonial entities as well as the immediate and lingering importance of its aftermath. Focusing squarely on the year 1898 as pivotal moment in Guam's history, it begins with an exploration of an island left to its own devices, the opportunity for Chamorro agency, and ponderings on what Guam's future could have been otherwise. The chapter also lays out the wide-sweeping efforts of the United States in acquiring overseas territories, its ascension to imperialism, and its failure to grant the Chamorro people their constitutional right to self-governance via self-determination.

A decent portion focuses primarily on the unique and unprecedented opportunity afforded to appointed and assumed leaders, Indigenous and settler alike, through the precarious position of acting governor. In the immediate wake of U.S. naval capture, the Spanish administration was duly deposed, and American naval rule was established but not enforced. As a truly open-ended moment with several possibilities entertained and

exercised, there existed a yearlong period of political contention, corruption, and ultimately confusion in local affairs. From cockfights to leprosy, the ambivalence of the Portusach v. Sisto debate is told in full. In competing for governorship, questions of authority, alliance, and agency are raised. Through seeming and substantiated allegiances based on ideas of race, ethnicity, and nationality, the historical tone of pro-Chamorro vs. pro-American camps is heavily critiqued. Moreover, this segment recounts the importance of Chamorro leadership through figures like Padre Palomo, Joaquin Perez, and the first of many advisory councils composed of Chamorro elite. Despite the complexity of their constrictions, I strive to capture these subtle but strong assertions of Chamorro agency. To substantiate and support this opening tale and my own conclusions, I incorporate secondary sources from various points of view. Through the foundational scholarship of Paul Carano, Robert F. Rogers, and Pedro “Doc” Sanchez, I both interrogate inconsistencies and offer a streamlined idea of what occurred way back when in 1898. Beyond reliance on standard textbook style histories of Guam, I also reference some U.S. military accounts via Guam governors and governmental websites. In doing so, a more well-rounded argument is formed.

Additionally, this chapter takes a pointed stand by painting the United States in a particularly painful, but pertinent light. Rather than a benevolent bearer of democracy, this era represents a peak expansion for American empire. More than just its absorption of island entities into the fold, the chapter addresses the imperial disregard for Indigenous rights. With no negotiation of rights, self-governance, or the like taking place, Indigenous inhabitants unwillingly enter new colonial relationships. From the Caribbean to the

Pacific, Guam is just one example of many island nations who were traded on the map like chess pieces. To solidify Guam's place within this larger framework of U.S. imperialism, I draw heavily from recent publications by U.S. historians. Substantiating my intuition and research conclusions, these American historians root their arguments through conceptions of militarism and its distant outposts. Serving as the epitome of a distant colonial outpost, Guam's militaristic value lies in its strategic location and concealed importance. Although not the first to point the fallacy of American democracy out, their work signifies increasing acceptance of this unfortunate history that Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) communities have lived to tell the tale.

As recipients of such realities, Indigenous islanders of these newly claimed colonies were merely collateral to the lands they inhabited. Like an unwanted child, they were regarded as wards of the U.S. nation-state rather than American citizens. In the case of Guam, they underwent another bureaucratic shift. Although Congress was appointed the responsibility to determine the civil rights of Chamorros and the political status of Guam, the U.S. Navy watched over the island and its people from 1899 onward until World War II and shortly thereafter as well. Beholden to their governor, who served as both Naval Commander and presiding official of local affairs, Guam and its people fell under complete military rule. Despite the ebbs and flows of a military regime dependent on the whims of the governor at hand, Chamorros still managed to exercise agency and maintain culture.

Acting as the glue of this thesis, my second chapter serves to connect and contextualize the first and last body chapters by filling in selective blanks. By identifying

major historical events and processes of the mid twentieth century, this section focuses on their relation to the eventual bloom of Chamorro activism. In addition, it explains why Guam was decades behind Turtle Island in terms of political organizing through its depiction of the island's modernization process. In doing so, this historical rendering explicitly explores how these developments bore lasting influence on both the Chamorro psyche and the perpetual political status of their island.

In characterizing World War II and the Organic Act, each event operated as an avenue for Americanization. Whilst World War II gave way to the popularized postwar liberation narrative, the Organic Act acknowledged Chamorro aspirations to U.S. citizenship and self-governance. Although both respective legacies heavily informed Chamorro attitudes regarding political status, I argue the Organic Act proved more significant in solidifying Guam's political stasis. Coupled with the gratitude and complacency established by both, this chapter also includes socioeconomic change as part and parcel of why Guam was so stuck politically.

Although tangential, I also chose to impart a brief historical overview of Guam's developmental history from the mid to late 20th century for several reasons. First off, one realizes what trends enabled Guam's eventual economic dependency on external entities like the continental United States and to a lesser, but still crucial extent, Asia. Set off by postwar destruction and displacement from ancestral lands, the standard agrarian lifestyle was not only disrupted but often replaced by foreign interests and imports. As the world around shifted with respect to trends of globalization and decolonization, Guam's trajectory towards modernization took a decisively American tone. Thanks in large part to natural disasters like super typhoons Karen (1962) and Pamela (1976), the U.S.

government's enormous relief packages constituted heavy American investment in island-wide infrastructure. On the path of perceived progress, such development was also accompanied by significant growth in key industries. In particular, the dual influence of tourism and military interests aided immensely in the island's projected priorities and idealized image in relation to modernity.⁹ More than anything, both sources of economic income included an unspoken tax of further American assimilation. As the U.S. military continued to increase their scope over the lands and livelihoods of the Chamorro people, American patriotism became more widespread on island. Moreover, the island's booming tourist industry relied heavily on the exotic, palatable model of Hawai'i for its primarily Asian audience. As exemplified by the slogan "where America's day begins," Guam's marketing strategy also displayed a desire for proximity over periphery in relation to the United States.

In turn, modernity and Americanization became intertwined, if not synonymous, when it came to their influence on Guam's socioeconomic development. This ultimately came at the expense of Chamorro culture, as intersecting questions of identity and authenticity arose. In beginning my quest of documenting Chamorro activism of the late 20th century, I track the course of Para'Pada Y CHamorus, also referred to as PARA PADA. In challenging the Americanization of Guam, the organization fought on behalf of the Chamorro community. Through the merging of The People's Alliance for Responsive Alternatives (PARA) and the People's Alliance for Dignified Alternatives

⁹ For more, see:

Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, *Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai'i and the Philippines*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

Teresia Teaiwa, "Reflections on Militourism, US Imperialism, and American Studies," *American Quarterly* Vol. 68, No. 3, 2016.

(PADA), PARA-PADA was one of the first Chamorro collectives to mobilize the community around issues such as language revitalization and political status. This grassroots strategy proved quite successful, especially in terms of their village-to-village campaign against a Guam Constitution. Deemed a distraction, PARA-PADA's derailment of the Guam Constitution pathed the way for other groups to address the island's political status down the road. As the forebears of modern Chamorro activism, PARA PADA proved Chamorros could make political change. By organizing and informing the public, this group would remain highly influential to others throughout the rest of the 20th century.

For my third and final chapter, I analyze two organizations which advocated for both civil and Indigenous rights. Following the precedent set by PARA PADA in the 1970's, this chapter charts the trajectory of two Chamorro activist groups through their targeted issues, chosen tactics, as well as the outcomes of their organizing. In sequential order, I will be focusing first on the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights, then Nasion Chamoru. To conclude, the chapter will end with a compare-and-contrast assessment to highlight their similarities and differences. I believe it is essential to employ this model to highlight their interconnectedness.

As a collective composed of Indigenous Chamorro and settler ally members, the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R) formed to affirm the Chamorro right to self-determination. In highlighting Chamorros' inherent connection to the land, their right to self-governance as outlined in U.N. and U.S. governmental documents, and their continued deprivation of political rights, the group utilized history for the double-edged sword it is. On a local level, OPI-R engaged in grassroots activism through

creating educational pamphlets and political cartoons to stir the hearts and minds of Chamorros on Guam to stand alongside them in their cause. On national and international levels, OPI-R sought state recognition as a form of reparations. Due in large part to the group's highly educated background, they provided their thorough historical research, thoughtful personal testimonies, and their collective contemporary struggle at formal bodies like the U.S. Congress and the United Nations. In navigating this trifecta of important congregations for support and approval, OPI-R gave voice to growing frustration with the island's political status and represented the Chamorro self-determination movement.

Although OPI-R's advancement of such an agenda was considered controversial, it proved less contentious in comparison to Nasion Chamoru. Representing a distinct brand of Chamorro nationalism, the collective was rooted in class struggle and routed primarily by a desire to protect and recover Chamorro land, culture, and political rights. Like other activist organizations, grassroots campaigning was integral to the framework of Nasion Chamoru. However, the group posed a stark contrast due to the public attention and critique they amassed their pointed strategy of provocation. Moreover, Nasion Chamoru's firm stance on independence symbolized a growing shift from seeking only self-determination to the idea of obtaining full sovereignty.

Despite notable differences between OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru, they considered their role in shaping the Chamorro future on Guam as a serious endeavor endowed with responsibility. Navigating uncharted territory, they both enacted solidarity with other oppressed peoples in addition to their pre-existing work of pressuring powerful institutions. Within the confines of this chapter, I will mostly be focusing on what

Kanaka Maoli scholar Kehaulani Vaughn calls “trans-Indigenous relations.”^[1] In capturing solidarity efforts made between Chamorros and other Indigenous peoples, I hope to elucidate the importance and impact of kindred coalition-building on the imaginative capacity and steady growth of Chamorro activism. Perhaps my most compelling evidence, *Let Freedom Ring: The Chamorro Search for Sovereignty* represents the unprecedented meeting between Chamorro activists and representatives from the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians on Guam. Known for advising other Indigenous peoples worldwide on how to approach economic independence based on a colonial past and present, this mini documentary envisions Guam’s political future through a socioeconomic lens. Along with personal interviews by members of OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru, the film also features segments of UN hearings and historical retellings to paint the full picture. Most importantly, *Let Freedom Ring!* illustrates the lines of connection and mutual interest in prosperity constitute reciprocal relationships that can exist and have been established between Chamorros, California Indians, as well as other Indigenous groups.

A Final Note, or the End to a Prelude

Altogether, this thesis serves to encapsulate specific historical events and trends on Guam as they pertain to not only its perpetual political status, but the Chamorro people as well. Starting with the turn of the 20th century, I consider the Filipino-Cuban-Spanish-American War of 1898 and its aftermath as impetus for such stasis decades later. Due to the transfer of colonial power and its subsequent conditions of American military rule, there resulted a lack of consent afforded to its Indigenous inhabitants. As shown

later, Chamorro activists of the late 20th century took this as a grave disrespect of political rights and sought to restore it as a form of reparations. In connecting the two separate eras, my intentional inclusion of significant mid-century moments and developments provides further background on the build-up behind later Chamorro activism. Although long overdue in comparison to movements occurring on Turtle Island decades earlier, Guam's overt activism via formal organizations and public protests ran on island time for a good reason. In making their own waves in their own time through their own island-informed methodologies, Chamorro activism advocated on behalf of its Indigenous community on local, national, and international levels. In addressing this institutional trifecta, this multilayered approach showcased Chamorro activism's interdependent tendencies in achieving self-determination and sovereignty.

As my final project, I chose this topic as the culmination of my undergraduate experience at Pomona because I believe in its direct relevance to today and its potential to inspire Chamorros and others from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and communal struggles that the battle for sovereignty rages on. In my epilogue, I will recount current moments of Indigenous activism and resistance to U.S. militarism in relation to COVID-19, environmental stewardship, and the ever-pressing question of political status. As I contemplate the ideal audience of this thesis, I imagine my parents and grandparents. I hope this work inspires them to see the value of decolonization despite the current reality we find ourselves in.

Chapter 1:
Embodied Sociopolitical Sovereignty on Pre-War Guam:
Recapitulating the Legacy of 1898 and Pre-War Guam

If we could come into the awareness that our ancestors are neither absent nor far away, we could take from this the sustenance our souls so badly need. Such an understanding enables us to confront the callousness of a history needing us always to believe we are victims, not agents. What we must take from this collision is an opportunity to become the kind of people we want to be in this world.”

-Julian Aguon¹

On a humid, late July afternoon, I met the lovely Moneka De Oro for lunch to hear her life story and trajectory towards political activism. In the spirit of ecological time, she expressed engaging in the movement for environmental protection made her think, “about the kind of ancestors we’re gonna become, because we are future ancestors” and how she felt an inherent responsibility to those future generations.² Embodying a legacy of strong Chamorro women, De Oro worked as a public school teacher with a focus on Guam and U.S. history, and was a newly appointed member to the board of directors for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). What stood out about our conversation was her penchant for history and its potential for positive impact on her students, as well as the larger Chamorro community: “We have to remember our resilience and our own resistance over the years... almost 500 years of foreign domination and how we are still here is such a beautiful story to retell... It definitely isn’t something most that most people are aware of and once you open people’s eyes to it, especially the youth, it’s a beautiful and empowering thing to bear witness to.”³ Inheriting a legacy of her own, this passion for remembering the past and perpetuating it

¹ Julian Aguon, *Just Left of the Setting Sun* (Tokyo: blue ocean press, 2006), 72.

² Moneka De Oro, interview conducted by author, Agana, July 23rd, 2019.

³ Ibid.

to Chamorro youth harkened back to late 20th activism on Guam. In Moneka's case, her return to the distant past served as a reminder that modern Chamorros had a history they may not be entirely aware. Along parallel lines, Chamorro activist groups of the late 20th century evoked historical thinking not only to empower their community but to seek protection, if not restoration, of political rights and true self-governance.

For Chamorro activists of the late 20th century, the year 1898 set the most critical precedent from which to consider Guam's contemporary lack of political sovereignty. Due to the Spanish-American War and the Treaty of Paris, major shifts in power occurred which greatly impacted many island colonies. In the case of Guam, the lingering influence of such events on Chamorro livelihoods would reverberate for generations. In their efforts to achieve self-determination and/or sovereignty, Chamorro activists heavily relied on (re)telling history as they had come to know it. By clinging to dates farther back in time like 1898, they ascribed both a deeper significance and duration to their deprivation of political rights, both civil and Indigenous. In their argumentation, they employed a dual method via testimony of personal experience as well as dissection of legal documents. Presenting at international forums like the United Nations Committee on Decolonization and U.S. Congressional hearings, Chamorro activist organizations were asking the U.S. nation-state to be held accountable for its colonial legacy on Guam by restoration of political rights. Whilst well-constructed and noble in nature, navigating these channels for reparations had its pitfalls.

From a congressional standpoint, lawmakers unfamiliar with Chamorro history, let alone the significance of an unfulfilled treaty obligation, may count it a minor discretion. Given the nation's lack of upholding various treaty agreements with Native peoples of Turtle Island, this does not come as a surprise.⁴ Viewing history through a modernist lens, utilizing 1898 as the focal point of one's argument may appear irrelevant to the governing body. Due to its place in the remote past, the argument is rendered invalid. Whereas for an Indigenous people fighting for their rights, there is no other option but to bring up the past. For Chamorro activists, their narrations could not help but circle back to age old claims of political bereavement. Embodying Hau'ofa's framework of ecological time, Chamorro activists kept the memory of their pre-war ancestors alive not only for the sake of themselves, but for future generations of Chamorros. Despite these good intentions, the argument proves fruitless.

If Chamorro activists were unable to sway legislators because of clear treaty violations, is there a reasonable way to convince them on moral grounds? Hopeful for justice to triumph, would pleading on the basis of good will be sufficient? Unfortunately, another effort made in vain. For this explanation, we look again to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's deconstruction of history. By assuming the government will set things right when faced with the truth, we are in self-denial. Instead of believing history is merely about justice or enlightenment, we must instead realize how deeply entrenched power is in the fabric of history. As Smith cautions, "In this sense history is not important for indigenous peoples because a thousand accounts of the 'truth' will not alter the 'fact' that indigenous

⁴ Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, 1st ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971).

peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice.”⁵ Moreover, as Black radical Assata Shakur implores the African-American community to remember, “Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them.”⁶ Whilst keeping in mind these main claims by Smith and Shakur, it is also necessary to address the circumstances behind how and why such straightforward conclusions of resistance and rejection of Western history could not occur on Guam. The following chapter works to provide that context as well as offer new ways of envisioning 1898, forms of resistance, and Chamorro assertions of agency.

The Height of U.S. Imperialism in all its Naval Glory

As a nation supposedly built on ideals of freedom and democracy, the United States does not have the best track record. In its conception, the newly independent nation took shape due to their collective grievance of taxation without representation amongst other concerns. Despite severing this colonial relationship, Great Britain still influenced the nation’s trajectory. Whilst European maritime explorations resulted in subsequent colonization the world over from the 15th to 17th centuries, the United States reproduced this legacy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. As a product of its past, American imperialism bore a striking resemblance to its former oppressor because it was not only powerfully vicious but adapted its stratagem to the times. As historian Bernard Brodie argues, “it is not an historical accident that the powerful resurgence of imperialism in the

⁵ Smith, 35.

⁶ Assata Shakur, Angela Y Davis, and Lennox S Hinds. *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill, 1987), 139.

latter part of the nineteenth century coincided with the great development of the steamship.”⁷ In order to compete with its European counterparts, the U.S. government heavily invested in the idea and implementation of sea power. Renowned American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, exemplified this in his military philosophies. Epitomized by his book *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, “[Mahan] preached the gospel of geopolitics and nationalism, that to become a great nation the United States must extend its sea power beyond the North American continent to strategic locations in the Pacific and in the Caribbean.”⁸ More than anything, Mahan and other proponents of sea power were securely focused on what benefits such acquired assets would bring to the U.S. and the U.S. alone. To prevent enemy interference or advancements, American procurement of island entities were often one-sided endeavors made at the detriment of Native peoples.

Money Matters: Foreign Intervention Spurred by Economic Interests

Beyond militaristic matters, the motive of economic gain also played a substantial role. As historian David Immerwahr contextualizes, “The wealth of nations, he [Mahan] argued, came from maritime commerce. Yet ships could not simply cast off for distant lands. They needed ports, coaling stations, warehouses, and other way stations along their paths. They also needed naval protection, which required still more overseas bases.”⁹ As

⁷ Bernard Brodie, “Geography and the Fuel Problem,” *Sea Power in the Machine Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 106-107.

⁸ Robert F. Rogers, “The Anglo-Saxon Way 1898-1903,” *Destiny’s Landfall* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 102.

⁹ Daniel Immerwahr, “Empire State of Mind,” *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 63.

a result, the turn of the 20th century was a key moment in which American military, as well as business, interests covertly expanded into the Pacific. From tiny unclaimed islands¹⁰ to the acquisition of American Samoa,¹¹ it was not a singular nor chance occurrence. The year 1898 overwhelmingly demonstrated American imperial intent with the overthrow and subsequent illegal annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai'i¹² as well as the imperial exchange of Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico from Spanish to American hands. Parceled out to the highest bidder, Spanish withdrawal also enabled German purchase over much colonial domain of Micronesia¹³ and Japanese imperial incursions would be made years later under the guise of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (1931-1945). Operating within the arena of global colonial expansion via sea power, a great geopolitical partitioning of Oceania was taking place. Akin to the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and Scramble for Africa (1885-1914), such settlements were agreed upon by global powers without the consent of the soon-to-be governed. Despite their own pre-existing forms of government and sovereignty, Pacific Islanders became populations in question.

Inheriting not just islands but their Indigenous inhabitants, colonial powers had to issue a verdict on how to treat their new subjects. Deliberations lacked consent because there was no consultation on terms of subjecthood or discussion of treaty provisions that

¹⁰ U.S. claims of sovereignty over Jarvis, Baker, and Howland (1856) and Midway (1867); Rogers, 102.

¹¹ United States, Germany, and Great Britain create a protectorate over Samoa, in which this colonial initiative resulted in 1899 U.S. acquisition of American Samoa; Robert Mackenzie Watson, *History of Samoa* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1918).

¹² Puhipau, and Joan Lander, dirs. *Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation*. Na Maka O Ka'Aina, 1993.

¹³Through secret negotiations with Spain prior to a U.S.-Spain treaty settlement, Germany purchased the Marshalls and Carolines, including Palau and all the Marianas except Guam. According to Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 106.

stipulated their civil liberties and governmental systems. In the case of Guam, the Treaty of Paris was not upheld on behalf of the Chamorro people because of bureaucratic transference. As a spoil of war amongst other former Spanish colonies, Guam's political future was addressed in the fine print. Under the treaty, there existed this stipulation concerning Chamorro rights: "Article IX. ...The civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States shall be determined by the Congress."¹⁴ Despite this clear directive, Congress did not carry it out. As former Guam Legislative Speaker Carlos P. Taitano noted, "In spite of this treaty obligation, President William McKinley issued a two-sentence executive order placing Guam completely under the navy."¹⁵

From the start, military interests took precedence over the protection of political rights on Guam. Months before the treaty was signed, the U.S. Navy was already scoping out Guam's potential for military purposes. In fact, "The day before the peace treaty was signed, the United States gunboat Bennington... was ordered to proceed to Guam for the purpose of charting the harbor, selecting a site for a coaling station, and taking possession of public lands bordering the harbor."¹⁶ Through assessment and assumption of the land as their own, it only became a matter of time before this transfer of authority from Congress to the military would be substantiated. After the signing of the treaty on

¹⁴ Direct line from the Treaty of Paris, as quoted by U.S. Department of Interior. "Treaty of Paris of December 10, 1898," accessed September 20th, 2020. <https://www.doi.gov/oia/about/treaty1898#main-content>.

¹⁵ Carlos P. Taitano, "Political Development," *Kinalamten Pulitikât: Siñenten I CHamoru, Issues in Guam's Political Development: The CHamoru Perspective* (Agaña: The Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1996).

¹⁶ Pedro C. Sanchez, "Part Two: Spanish Guam," *Guaahan/Guam: The History of our Island* (Agana: Sanchez Publishing House, 1998), 76.

December 10th, 1898, it only took thirteen days for President McKinley to follow navy recommendations and issued Executive Order 108-A. Instead of enabling a civilian government to come to fruition on island, Congress heeded McKinley's order and relinquished complete jurisdiction and oversight of Guam to the U.S. military. As a result, the highly touted principles of democracy, representation, and civil liberties espoused by the United States did not extend to Guam. Given its primary purpose as a naval outpost, the island and its Native people were an afterthought the naval administration tasked to watch over them.

The American Military Regime on Guam: Assessing the Pre-War Period

From the onset, the U.S. Navy exerted absolute control over the Chamorro people and could even be read as an appointed military dictatorship because of how much power was vested in the appointed governor. Encompassing all realms on island, the "chief executive was given two hats: one strictly military hat by appointment from the secretary of the navy as 'Commandant, United States Naval Station, Guam,' and a second hat by presidential commission as 'Governor of Guam' with jurisdiction over all nonmilitary matters."¹⁷ With a population under 10,000 on an island of 210 square miles, the governor ran an authoritarian ship on island. According to Carlton Skinner, Guam's first appointed civil governor, "It was 'military colonial rule' in the classic form established by all military conquerors from Caesar to Marshall Lyautey... Military colonial rule is evil in principle because the civil population is not free to make its own decisions."¹⁸

¹⁷ Rogers, 108.

¹⁸ Carlton Skinner, "The First Pacific Island Self-Government," *Pacific Perspective*, v. 9, n. 2 (1980), 57.

Moreover, the precarious position of an all-powerful governor held an inherently dubious nature for appointed leader and Native population alike. As historian Julius Pratt expands, "...The reign of naval officers in Guam and American Samoa was more like that of enlightened despots. They were restrained by no constitution, no organic act, but only by their own moderation, their short terms of office (normally 18 months to 2 years), and of course, the superior authority of the Navy Department and the President, which seldom interfered with their activities."¹⁹ As inexperienced transplants, American naval governors fluctuated in their commitment to the protection of rights for the Chamorro people. Given such short-term limits, it became an endless cycle of freshly appointed naval administrators. In fact, "Between Guam's annexation in 1899 and World War II, it had nearly forty governors."²⁰ Because there was no time or incentive to do so, a governor was not obligated to establish deeper understandings of Chamorro people or their culture. He only had to run island affairs. In turn, naval administrations were determined by the governor's personality. Ranging from policies regulating social life and personal behavior to the power to carry out executions by hanging, there was equal chance of a benevolent or malevolent military dictator every two years or so. With the establishment of such a regime on island, the structure of governorship was dangerously powerful. Provided such reflections and evidence, pre-war American governing on Guam was authoritarian in nature. As a result, any historical rendering of the Chamorro people from here on out would be intrinsically tied, rather infringed upon, by the domineering presence of military-style American imperialism.

¹⁹ Julius W. Pratt, *America's Colonial Experiment: How the United States Gained, Governed, and in Part Gave Away a Colonial Empire* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950), 221.

²⁰ Immerwahr, 155.

To provide a truly alternative history, this next segment of chapter 1 recounts the short-lived, but surprisingly action-packed story of the fight for acting governorship. Rooted in local affairs and race relations, it centers on Indigenous and Filipino political players. In taking certain liberties, it is an exploratory retelling of a fleeting moment on Guam without colonial administration. In applying the theory of Indigenous futurisms, it makes you wonder, “what if?”.

What Could Have Been: Applying Indigenous Futurisms Retroactively

“To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. Transforming our colonized views of our own history (as written by the West), however, requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under Western eyes. This in turn requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history.”

-Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*²¹

As the American ship *USS Charleston* and its captain Henry Glass fired at long abandoned forts, they swiftly captured the island from an unassuming administration as well as its final formal governor of the Spanish period, Juan Marina. Albeit violence-free and seemingly underwhelming, the American capture of Guam constituted one of several changes in colonial exchange across the globe. Almost like the eye of the storm, this relatively peaceful overthrow would be soon followed by a typhoon of political chaos, corruption, and contention. From June 1898 until January 1899, Guam was without a designated foreign administrator for the first time in 338 years. Like a gradual shift in the trade winds, the centuries long tropical depression of Guam’s Spanish era finally came to an end. Little did Chamorros know what would await them.

²¹ Smith, 36.

With both victor and vanquished departing for the Philippines to settle the score, Chamorros were left to their own devices at last. Before sailing off, Captain Glass had to appoint someone to stand in his stead to maintain American authority. Naturalized in 1888, Francisco Paul Martinez Portusach was the only American male citizen living on island. Based off this alone, it was said that Glass tasked him to oversee island affairs. However, this agreement was rendered informal because it was not captured in writing. For Don Jose Sisto Rodrigo, this lack of legality served as a point of contest. As an administrator of the Hacienda Publica (Public Treasury) of Guam prior to American arrival, Sisto quickly refuted Portusach's claim out of self-interest. Instead, Sisto believed he should become acting governor based on Spanish law, seniority, and the fact that he was the only non-Chamorro permitted to remain on the job and not sent back to the Phillipines. Swiftly usurping power, he also appointed himself provisional governor not just Guam, but the entirety of the Marianas.²² In addition, he also paid himself an eighteen-month advance in salary. Such drastic action enabled two supposed factions to arise: a "pro-Spanish" group led and enabled by Sisto and a "pro-American" group led by Portusach.

However, this proposed Spanish/American binary does little to address the complicated nature and dynamics of identity on Guam at the time. Contrary to this popularized retelling of events in textbook style histories like *Destiny's Landfall*²³ and

²² Guam is the southernmost island of the Marianas archipelago in Micronesia. The archipelago consists of 15 islands in total, with Guam being the largest in size and population.

²³ Rogers, 108-110.

Guahan/Guam: The History of Our Island,²⁴ I argue longer legacies of racial tension, ethnic mixing, and personality politics were at play. Optimizing their chances based on their positionality, central figures like Portusach and Sisto may have expressed allegiance to these two nations solely to obtain governorship. Operating in a highly concentrated local context, they were also reacting to a fluctuating sociopolitical landscape. Although Sisto capitalized on his job title as an administrative administrator, his rebellious behavior occurred in the absence of Spanish colonialism and aligned more so with pre-established Filipino-Chamorro race relations. Whereas Sisto was ethnically Filipino and simultaneously Spanish by virtue of his colonial claims to power, Portusach also possessed a multi-faceted identity which proved just as, if not more, complex to unravel.

As the son of a wealthy merchant, Portusach spent much of his childhood traversing the high seas aboard his father's trading vessels as they traveled from one Spanish territory to the next. According to the *New York Times*, "After his father's death and before he had reached his majority Francis Portusach left home, which had been made unbearable by the tyranny of an older brother."²⁵ Although left unstated, it is implied that Portusach calls the island of Guam home. Venturing forth into the world due to this family feud, Francisco took up residence in Chicago and San Francisco. Intermittently, he would make return trips back to Guam and found himself living on Guam when American forces just ten years after he became a U.S. citizen.

²⁴ Sanchez, 76-79.

²⁵ "Spaniards Rise in Guam: Refuse to Recognize Authority of Our Representative, It is Said," *New York Times*, editorial, December 31st, 1898.

Up until this point, I firmly believed Portusach was a Spaniard through and through due to his father's affluence and purported birthplace of Barcelona, Spain. After scouring ancestral records and nineteenth century newspaper articles, I soon discovered a contradiction. Some said Portusach was born in Barcelona, others said Agaña, Guam. Given I could not find an official birth certificate online, being unable to verify which location made me realize something else. Admittedly, it was wrongful to assume Portusach's birthplace alone could serve as a concrete indicator of his ethnic background. Although being born in Barcelona has the potential to signify one is Spanish, it is not guaranteed. Similarly, the business of one's last name as a guide to their ancestry is not a foolproof method. In the case of Guam, there exists a certain lexicon of local family names which often designate Chamorro identity. Due to intermarriage and baptismal naming, Chamorro families have equal propensity to possess Spanish surnames (Cruz, Perez, and Flores for example) as well as more distinctly Chamorro ones (Taitano, Gumataotao, and Quichocho amongst others). In looking at his full name, Francisco Paul Martinez Portusach, it is still rather presumptive to speculate anything beyond Spanish origin. And yet, after finding his family tree on ancestry.com, I can deduce that Portusach was at least a Spanish person whose family lived on Guam for at least a few generations. As the child of Joaquin *Aguon* Portusach and Remedios Antonia *Pangelinan* Martinez, I wondered if he held Chamorro ancestry due to the italicized surnames. After finding a transcript entitled "The Genealogy of the Portusach Family" on ancestry.com, it linked to a Facebook profile with a post further substantiating my interest in Portusach's possible dual Spanish and Chamorro origins. In reference to his parents, the original Spanish text reads, "Joaquín Portusach Aguón, nacido en 1830 en Agaña, Guam. Contrajo matrimonio

en 1855 con Remedios-Antonia Martínez Pangelinán, natural también de Agaña, hija del español Félix Martínez, y de la guamaní, Fermina Luján Pangelinan.”²⁶ With both parents born in Agaña, the island’s capital, the usage of “de la guamaní” leads me to believe they mean “of Guam,” which would most likely mean Chamorro. After this rather unorthodox but thorough investigation, I cannot conclude that Francisco Portusach has Chamorro origins, but at the very least his family has lived on island for decades and established Guam as home. Even if Portusach is not Chamorro, it is clear he is at least a localized settler who developed a reciprocal relationship with the Chamorro community.

As a result, subsequent battles for political power gained a more logical and compelling edge. Beyond this initial rivalry with Sisto, the layers of American allegiance and commitment to Chamorro interests behind Portusach’s actions were also substantiated. By working with powerful figures like Padre Palomo, Guam’s first Chamorro priest, Portusach’s investment in local leadership gained an entirely new meaning. Instead of merely two settlers vying for power, Portusach had assisted the Chamorro elite as an invested ally. In turn, his heavy involvement in local leadership and support of Chamorros at large proved the potential of interethnic alliance in the pre-war era. In his personal publication “History of the Capture of Guam by the United States Man-of-War Charleston and Its Transport,” Portusach mentions at least twenty different Chamorro men who figure throughout this tumultuous timeline.²⁷ Whether or not

²⁶ Portusach familia, “GENEALOGÍA DE LA FAMILIA PORTUSACH. Investigada en Agaña, Guam, en 1990, por el Mayor FRANK PORTUSACH,” December 1st, 2012. <https://www.facebook.com/296422337041647/photos/a.296431817040699.92934.296422337041647/562488750435003/?type=3&theater>.

²⁷ Bernard Punzalan, “Francisco Martinez Portusach: First Civilian Provisional Governor of Guam,” chamorroroots.com, May 28th, 2014, <https://www.chamorroroots.com/v7/index.php/49-taotao-tano/history/312-francisco-martinez-portusach-first-provisional-governor-of-guam>.

Francisco Portusach considered himself acting governor of Guam, his informal appointment offered him a new lens of hyper-vigilance when it came to suspicious characters like Sisto. Prior to the departure of the *USS Charleston*, Portusach recalls this line of conversation between him and Captain Glass: "... He asked if I was in need of aid, meaning soldiers for the island. I answered, "No," as the people are very good here;" to which Portusach notes, "After the Charleston had left for Manila, Don Justo de Leon Guerrero was acting as captain of the town and he had for his aid Don Venancio Roberto and they were in control of the city. I gave them full charge of the affairs of the public and I looked after the affairs of the island."²⁸ And yet, this island paradise was ultimately disrupted and would come to erupt in immense pandemonium a few months later.

In terms of local racial politics, remnants of Spanish colonialism manifested in antipathy between Chamorros and Filipinos on island. Acting as a minor penal colony, ex-convicts and criminals were brought from the Philippines to Guam by the previous Spanish administration. Additionally, Spanish implementation of a leprosarium and leper colonies throughout the Marianas would prove vital later. On December 12th, 1898, tensions between the two factions reached a fever pitch at a cockfight in Sumay. A disagreement between two individuals escalated to group violence which would only be quelled by Portusach brandishing his six shooter. Before this skirmish, Sisto once again caused a stir, this time by releasing an individual from the leper hospital in Asan. By endangering a population which had been continually decimated by disease, Sisto's

²⁸ Francisco Portusach, *History of the Capture of Guam by the United States Man-of-War Charleston and its Transport*, *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, April 1917), 711.

actions were now not only an affront to American occupation but a threat to Chamorro livelihood. On New Year's Eve, community leaders like the aforementioned Don Francisco Portusach and Gobernadorcillo (meaning "small governor") Justo de Leon Guerrero were gathered at the residence of Padre Palomo to discuss political affairs they must attend to altogether. In his priestly way, Palomo played peacemaker. Insisting on the importance of the leper Uson's return to the leper hospital, he even went so far as offering to pay the expenses. In gathering this collective, Palomo stressed the imminent need to depose Sisto. Given Palomo and Portusach's joint demands had fallen on the deaf ears of Sisto, the padre hoped he would find strength in numbers. Appealing to his compatriots, Palomo argued Sisto should resign because his power was tied to a foreign government that no longer had jurisdiction on island. Since American forces had not yet returned in any formal governing capacity, Palomo's actions were more pro-Chamorro if anything. In assembling this united front, the Chamorro priest's intuition was to handle local affairs via organized Indigenous authority. Although the precise details are hazy, the pro-Chamorro faction ultimately drafted a joint statement dismissing Sisto from office and naming Venancio Roberto, a leading resident of Agana and aid to the Gobernadorcillo, as Governor of Guam. To this point, Chamorro historian Doc Sanchez proudly declared, "By this action Chamorro rule over Guam was reestablished after 338 years of foreign administrators."²⁹

Not even a day later, the triumph of this task force had come under threat.

Accompanying the arrival of the new year, the collier *Brutus* and its captain Lieutenant

²⁹ Sanchez, 77.

Commander Vincedon L. Cottman constituted another American intervention. After heated debate amongst the political players, Cottman legitimized Sisto's claims to authority and allowed him to remain governor until Guam's status was ultimately decided. Dispatched to Guam after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Commander Edward D. Taussig of the *USS Bennington* arrived at Apra Harbor on January 23rd, 1899 and immediately took matters into his hands. Enabled by naval and presidential orders, Taussig began to oversee the island's civilian affairs as he saw fit. From late January to early February, both Taussig and Sisto issued back and forth orders of recognition. On January 28th, 1899, Taussig's first order directed Sisto to turn over all government money and records to American authorities whilst also allowing him to continue as acting governor until further notice. Two days later, Taussig's second order declared all former Spanish Crown lands bordering on Apra Harbor were now property of the U.S. Navy. This was merely the first overt American military land grab on Guam without consent of the governed. That very same day, Governor Sisto issued his own order acknowledging the end of the Spanish-American War, the Treaty of Paris, and its provision that "this island of Guahan has become a possession of the US while the other Northern islands remain under the sovereignty of Spain."³⁰ On February 1st, Sisto formally committed to relinquishing claim over Guam but maintained that he, "shall continue on behalf of Spain as the Acting Governor and Administrator of the Treasury for the islands comprising the Mariana group."³¹ By both conceding and holding onto this limited amount of power, Sisto rode out his role as acting governor until the wheels came off. Despite his cunning nature, the skeletons of Sisto's closet would ultimately come out to haunt him. Tasked

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

with examining records of the island's treasury, U.S. Navy Paymaster DuBois discovered Sisto's history of advanced pay. Although Sisto was purportedly arrested and charged with misuse of public funds, somehow only everyone else besides Sisto was paying up. According to Carano and Sanchez' history of Guam as well as Sanchez' solo storytelling, Sisto never paid his debts and subsequently left the island sometime after this.³² As per Rogers, "He had repaid his debt to the Guam treasury with money borrowed in part from Father Palomo."³³

Proving itself a rather complicated story, the events of 1898 leading into 1899 cannot be perceived as a simple pro-Spanish v. pro-American conflict, especially when no one on Guam was aware of the state of war until the arrival of the *Charleston*. Subverting the binary, Portusach and Sisto each contained multiple overlapping identities, adding a complex dimension of racial politics. Beyond their national allegiances, their actions can also be understood within a more universal driving incentive: individual gain. Without the active enforcement of American authority just yet, this liminal space rooted in local affairs arose. On Portusach's part, he was more pro-Chamorro than pro-American; in fact, his mission with Padre Palomo lay in a fierce desire to simply oust Sisto. Emboldened by his positionality as a former government official of the centuries long Spanish era, Sisto asserted a remarkable amount of sovereignty and subsequent greed in his two-time stint as governor. Through his actions, his stoking underlying animosity revealed a racially determined relationship that predated

³² Carano and Sanchez, 180; Sanchez, 78.

³³ Rogers, 110.

American arrival on island. In this way, displays of power at this time had deeper roots than simple allegiance to the United States; they were instead entrenched in the sociocultural landscape of Guam. In turn, I posit the designated dynamic of pro-American v. pro-Spanish was wrongfully simplistic but obviously biased. In context of the 19th century, it was not nuanced enough to aptly describe what was truly occurring beyond the war between America and Spain. Instead, modern values were ascribed to understand the era. As their work revealed a pro-American bent, these accounts were presentist.

Even when Chamorros worked tirelessly to rebuke Sisto, describing their efforts as pro-American proves faulty in context of Sisto's maintenance of power. As Lt. Cottman allowed Sisto to continue on as acting governor, this affirmation of Sisto's tactics confirmed two things. First, Sisto's strategy was more aligned with the incoming American regime than his opponents. Secondly, the binary allegiances tied to the Portusach v. Sisto debate were historically inaccurate. Because of this, I argue it is not only misleading but dangerously reminiscent of Guam's renowned liberation narrative. It clearly ascribes ideas and values which only came into fruition, namely that of the loyal and grateful native Chamorro to their American "liberators," after World War II. Projecting layered understandings of a colonial relationship not yet formulated, Guam in 1898 was not necessarily isolated but surely existed independent from this. Surviving almost 300 years of Spanish colonization, Chamorros both hybridized and maintained culture. With Spain gone, here was a genuine chance to exert political agency. Taking advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, Chamorro leaders did assert sovereignty devoid of foreign colonial influence. More than just acting on their own interests as

Chamorros, I argue this struggle was emblematic of a time that did not and could not exhibit later Chamorro tendencies of allegiance to American military power.

Moreover, the pro-American take is not only inscribed but deliberately erected to benefit and safeguard U.S. military interests through its constant pacification of stories which highlight the constant Chamorro desire for sovereignty. In its section entitled “The Four Acting Governors,”³⁴ the popular history textbook *A Complete History of Guam* by Paul Carano and Sanchez even excluded the cockfight and New Year’s Eve festivities, primarily focusing on economic matters and the role of Commander Taussig. Considering the time and seeming lack of interest in this particular episode of Guam’s political history, my main sources of narrative comparison relied on *Destiny’s Landfall*, *Guahan/Guam: The History of Our Island*, the ever-faithful Guampedia, and online U.S. military history accounts. As recent as 2017, the Naval History and Heritage Command released “Revisiting the U.S. Capture of Guam during the Spanish-American War” which shortened and obscured the narrative in key areas. Although the post acknowledges “Guam’s politics after American capture were far more complicated than [the popular narrative of Portusach v. Sisto] suggests,” it also argues “...what little evidence exists indicates that Portusach balanced power during this period with Sixto in an informal governing arrangement.”³⁵ A rather benevolent reading of nearly yearlong strife between two political opponents, Thompson also leaves out any mention of Padre Palomo’s

³⁴ Carano and Sanchez, 177-183.

³⁵ Marcus J. Thompson, “Revisiting the U.S. Capture of Guam during the Spanish-American War,” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, published in 2017, accessed August 13th, 2020. <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/spanish-american-war/us-capture-of-guam.html>.

involvement, the gathering of prominent Chamorro leaders to discuss the immoral behavior of Sisto, as well as the local appointment of Roberto as acting governor. Little historical significance can be derived from these events in terms of deeper impact, but how it is told surely reflects the narrator's perception of Chamorro affairs at the time and how it becomes imbued with contemporary meaning. On the flip side, Rogers, Sanchez, and various Guampedia entries offer more insight into Native agency despite the imminent imposition of a naval administration over Guam and its people.

Further Chamorro Interest in Self-Governance and Subsequent Conflict

Another moment of Chamorro political agency can be seen through the short but substantial term of Joaquin Perez, Guam's first appointed Chamorro governor. In February of 1899, Taussig removed Sisto from his second term and appointed Perez, a member of a manak'kilo family and Gobernadorcillo of Agana, as interim acting governor along with appointing an advisory council comprised of other prominent Chamorro men. Upon Taussig's departure, Guam's formal leadership was composed entirely of Chamorros: *Don* Justo de Leon Guerrero (the retired Gobernadorcillo), *Don* Juan Torres y Diaz, *Don* Luis Torres y Diaz, *Padre* Jose Palomo, and *Don* Vicente Herrero.³⁶ Once again, another possible moment of potential self-governance existed momentarily, until the next American ship pulled into Apra Harbor: the collier *Nanshan* and its commander Lieutenant Louis A. Kaiser and his civilian crew. Assigned to provide "naval surveillance of affairs on Guam," Kaiser assumed more

³⁶ Jillette Leon Guerrero, "Guam Leaders (1899-1904)," *Guampedia*, last modified October 15th, 2019, accessed August 13th, 2020. <https://www.guampedia.com/guam-leaders-from-1899-1904/>.

authority than previous naval officers like Cottman and Taussig.³⁷ Although there appeared to be no initial problems with the all-Chamorro administration, issues arose when the Spanish ships *Elcano* and *Esmeralda* sailed into the Marianas throughout June and July of 1899 to procure arms and other goods of the former Spanish administration on island. At first, Kaiser utilized his lack of a copy of the Treaty of Paris as an excuse to refuse Spanish ships seeking to reclaim what was rightfully theirs. Then he denied authorization from General Elwell S. Otis, an army general who also the U.S. commander of all the Philippines, because the army had no authority on Guam compared to the navy. Tyrannical on his own terms, Kaiser was unrelenting yet would not assume the position of governor himself. Likened to Lord Jim, Kaiser was “assuming authority in his little tropical kingdom when it suited him but without taking responsibility for the consequences.”³⁸ Eventually, Governor Perez took matters into his own hands by repatriating the contested goods back to a representative of the Spanish Governor of the Northern Marianas; Kaiser was infuriated that Governor Perez bypassed his decrees. In seeking support from the Chamorro council, Kaiser’s rage bubbled over after they all sided with Perez. Arguing he held more jurisdiction as the “senior officer” in charge of Guam, Kaiser replaced Governor Perez with William Coe, a personal friend and Samoan American. According to *Destiny’s Landfall*, “This was the first of innumerable later confrontations between island officials, who acted on the knowledge of complex, sometimes hidden local histories, and American officials, who demanded immediate solutions to problems on the basis of superficial information.”³⁹ Even after Kaiser’s hasty

³⁷ Sanchez, 78.

³⁸ Rogers, 110.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

appointment of Coe, which ended after only two weeks, Chamorros were finding ways to circumvent Kaiser's unjust authority. On July 23rd, local leaders created a bicameral legislature in which three men, including the politically active Padre Palomo, were elected to the upper house and six were chosen for the lower house. Such assertions were immediately dismantled by Kaiser, disrupting what would have been the first legislature in Guam's history. On August 7th, 1899 both Coe and Kaiser would lose their short-lived foothold on island. With the arrival of the *USS Yosemite* and Captain Richard Phillips Leary, Guam would officially become a U.S. Naval Station. After this, the aforementioned long line of appointed American naval officers would be in complete and direct control of island affairs, including governance of the Chamorro people.

Contextualizing these Seemingly Insignificant Stories

Although the oversimplified *Portusach v. Sisto* debate and the tumultuous tenure of Governor Joaquin Perez were short-lived, both episodes revealed distinct ways Chamorros were not only willing but eager to experience and exert agency at the end of the Spanish era. After almost 300 years of Spanish colonization, Chamorros were experiencing a moment of true freedom, albeit transitory. Until the arrival of Richard Leary, American imperial interests were not yet substantiated; the power imbalance of Chamorro-American relations simply had not yet taken form. American naval officers were wary to administer anything more than an order or two, allowing Chamorro leaders to maintain island affairs. At this point, no one was rendered a subservient colonial subject yet. In this way, 1898-1899 served as a pivotal moment in time to not only interrogate what happened and who was involved in the process, but how things could

have been different. Enveloped in constant change and uncertainty, this sequence of events serves as an opportunity to retrospectively imagine what future Chamorros might have enjoyed otherwise.

Deployment of Indigenous Futurisms

Through an epistemological framework like Indigenous futurisms, the history of Guam at the turn of the 20th century can be utilized to understand later historical parallels as well as present day battles for Chamorro political sovereignty. Coined by Anishinaabe scholar Dr. Grace Dillon to conceptualize the role of science fiction in the survivance⁴⁰ of Native futures, “Indigenous Futurism is a growing movement in—but not limited to—Indian Country, where Native peoples dare to reimagine societal tropes, alternative histories and futures through the exploration of science fiction and its sub-genres. This comes in a variety of mediums consisting of comics, fine arts, literature, games and other forms of media.”⁴¹ In *Walking the Clouds*, Native slipstream is especially valuable to re-evaluating this era of Chamorro history, as it “infuses stories with time travel, alternate realities and multiverses, and alternative histories. As its name implies, Native slipstream views time as pasts, presents, and futures that flow together like currents in a navigable stream. It thus replicates nonlinear thinking about space-time.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Gerald R. Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

⁴¹ Monica Whitepigeon, “Indigenous Futurism Ushers in New Perspectives of Past, Present, and Future,” *Native News Online*, July 18, 2020. <https://nativenewsonline.net/arts-entertainment/indigenous-futurism-ushers-in-new-perspectives-of-past-present-and-future#:~:text=Indigenous%20Futurism%20is%20a%20growing,fiction%20and%20its%20sub%2Dgenres>.

⁴² Grace L. Dillon, “Introduction: Imagining Indigenous Futurism,” *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*. Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Series, V. 69 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 3.

Like fiction writers, historians weave together narratives; the only difference is we tell ourselves we are constructing truth from facts, when really we are selectively sharing what events and details we may think are important enough to tell the story. By recounting these two specific historical episodes, I work to re-center the experiences and agency of the Chamorro people. Just as a shift in imperial geopolitics came to directly affect island nations like Guam, moments like these offer a more localized perspective of the island's history. Beyond amplifying the role of Chamorro actors in these histories, applying a lens of Indigenous futurism to the narrative creates an opportunity to entertain a future where Chamorros could possess full autonomy and chart their own course as they wished. A common theme in Indigenous futurisms is to imagine a world or an alternate reality in which Native peoples did not undergo colonization and genocide. Such speculation acts as a grave reminder that all Indigenous peoples have managed to go on. Generation after generation, it also nods to how they presently live in post-apocalyptic physical and psychological conditions.⁴³ In undergoing two massive sociocultural regime changes by way of Spanish and American colonial forces, Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome⁴⁴ has continually plagued the Chamorro people, their ancestral island environment, and their Indigenous ways of knowing and living since Magellan's arrival in 1521. To combat this compounding of tragedies, evocation of Indigenous futurisms is

⁴³ Cutcha Risling Baldy, "On telling Native people to just "get over it" or why I teach about the Walking Dead in my Native Studies classes..." personal website, published December 11th, 2013, accessed September 8, 2020, www.cutcharislingbaldy.com.

⁴⁴ Lawrence William Gross, "The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion," *The American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002): 436-459.

a way to self-soothe generational trauma as well as active calls “to envision a decolonized future in which we are no longer the dispossessed.”⁴⁵

Returning to 1898, Guam’s trajectory held endless possibilities; even with the way things ended, the late nineteenth century still offers room for contemplation. By being rooted in the past and looking towards the future, this unique moment in history has the potential to enlighten future generations of Chamorros. When told from an Indigenous point of view, the turn of the twentieth century enables Chamorros to interrogate what they have been told about themselves and their history, and more importantly, whether they have the power to change that. There is no way to envision a better future without reflecting on what was; Native peoples must be creative in terms of how they reclaim history, research, and other academic pursuits for themselves and their communities. When left with the hope for what could have been, we must always reserve hope for the future and find solace in recognizing the resilience and strength that was evidenced by our ancestors. As Moneka de Oro stated in her interview, we must also remember that we are future ancestors ourselves. If our ancestors could outlive Spanish colonization and American assimilation, then surely, we can muster up the courage to show up and resist in our own ways. As evidenced by chapter 3, Chamorros would make such interventions by forming activist organizations and engaging in political protest during the late 20th century.

⁴⁵ Charles Sepulveda, “Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing *Kuuyam* as a Decolonial Possibility,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2018), 40.

Chapter 2:
The Building Blocks of 20th Century Guam:
World War II, the Organic Act, and 1970's Chamorro Activism

Living an ocean away, I normally call my Grandma Chris on the phone every holiday to thank her for the card and exchange life updates. Growing up shy, I was never a fan of phone calls; it was the kind of nervous anticipation that you would do anything to get out of. And yet, that nervousness would immediately dispel when I heard the kindhearted chuckle of my grandmother on the other line. With a distinctly Chamorro accent, her voice carried subtle intricacies that required me to actively listen. By the end, my phone call phobia washed away and was instead replaced with sadness to say goodbye. In summer 2019, I finally got the chance to have complete conversations with my grandma in person. Thanks to a Pomona-funded research opportunity, it was the first time I got to spend an extended amount of time on island as a young woman and historian. After my parents left mid-July to return to California, it was also my first time living alone with my grandparents for two weeks. In being afforded this amazing opportunity, I was most excited to interview my grandma. As we sat on the plush sofa shrouded in the air-conditioned part of her house, I could not help but wonder about the life story and experiences of the woman in front of me, Cresencia Cruz Castro.

Cresencia was born on Yap, but she was not Yapese. Although a survivor of World War II, she was never compensated for her troubles. Always prone to make light of a serious situation, she considered it a case of wrong island, wrong time. When the war did end, the U.S. government wanted all Chamorro families on Yap to relocate back to the Marianas. From Yap, her family went to Tinian; from Tinian, she went to Saipan; from Saipan, she went to Guam. Arriving alone in 1959, she was sponsored by a military

family to live on Andersen Air Force Base. In 1961, her family came to join her on Guam and they all lived in Piti. Because her father was killed by U.S. forces in wartime and her mom had become absentee, my grandma experienced immense hardship. As the eldest daughter of eight children, she assumed the role and responsibilities of parenting her younger siblings. To take care of them, she fostered a determined mindset and diligent work ethic. Raising four kids on her own without child support, she carried this over to her work as a seamstress as well as her career in GovGuam's Public Works Department. Just as renowned Chamorro scholar Keith Camacho put it, everyday people "make history, as much as they are made by it."¹ In the case of my Grandma Chris, her job trajectory from technician to planner at Public Works enabled her to play a key role in the development of Guam's highway system in the late 20th century. Reflecting on her life and the modernization of Guam, Grandma Chris exclaimed, "It's really fascinating because who would've thought, you know when I landed here in 1959, that I would get to live to see what is happening here. That's what you call progress."²

In assessing the highs and lows of my grandmother's fascinating life story, I cannot help but notice how her deep grief and sheer joy were both caused by the same entity. As the war not only ended in her father's death but with her mother becoming absentee, I was curious as to how she came to terms with this reality. Exemplified by her life story, migrating back to her homeland on American terms was of large benefit. Embodying this transition from postwar degradation to rapid modernization, her role as a

¹ Keith Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands*, Pacific Islands Monograph Series 25 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

² Cresencia Castro, interview by author, Yigo, July 26th, 2019.

Public Works planner had her actively engaging in the island's transformation. As a WWII survivor, she attested to the "liberation" narrative of Guam. Whilst thoroughly patriotic, she still retained a desire to protect the island from further environmental damage. Albeit steadfast in her gratitude for the U.S. military, she is still fully capable of critiquing them on environmental grounds as well. To contextualize such complicated and competing views, this connective chapter explores major mid-century events like World War II and the Organic Act. The latter half focuses on how Guam's modernization was externally influenced by the U.S. military and foreign tourism. Altogether, this chapter sets the stage for Chamorro activism which would take place decades later.

The Importance of World War II and the Organic Act

Almost 100 years after Henry Glass and the *USS Charleston*'s arrival to Guam, Chamorros came to another critical impasse. In leading up to what would become the beginning of formal, organized activism on island starting in the 1970's, there existed underlying sentiments and setbacks which prevented earlier protest from occurring. The groundwork for this local dissatisfaction regarding political status had been laid by two critical junctures between 1898 and the latter decades of the 1900's: World War II (December 8th, 1941- August 10th, 1944 on Guam) and the Organic Act (1950).

For starters, World War II wholly disrupted Chamorro lifestyles on both a physical and psychological basis. Due to American air and naval raids, the island's geography was completely altered, if not destroyed. As a result, the lack of arable land disrupted the traditional agrarian lifestyle on Guam. Moreover, due to military land-takings and subsequent buildup, many Chamorro families were displaced from their

ancestral lands with no choice and very little compensation. It also enabled a hyperpatriotic atmosphere on Guam, as Americans came to be recognized as less violent of a colonizer in comparison to the Japanese. Albeit short-lived, the brutality of Japanese occupation permeated the minds of those who endured their wrath and lived to see the day of American “liberation.”³ As the day U.S. armed forces recaptured Guam from Japanese occupation, July 21st is an island-wide holiday known as “Liberation Day” to commemorate the occasion. Over time, the holiday evoked different meanings for different people: “Liberation Day is also a product of and an apparatus for remembering many different things: it recalls a Chamorro story of intense suffering, of enduring loyalty to the United States, and finally, of intense gratitude and love toward America for returning to ‘liberate’ the Chamorros. But it is also a day opposed, and even appropriated, by Chamorro rights activists who are not so affectionate toward the United States. Liberation Day is a packed term.”⁴ Immediate postwar Guam certainly evinced widespread Chamorro loyalty to the liberation narrative, as this traditional gratitude tangibly triumphed over the wants and desires of self-governance, citizenship, and other initiatives called for by native activists. Without political opposition, which precipitated into the peaceful but purposeful Guam Congress Walkout of 1949, there would be no Organic Act of 1950.⁵

³ Cyril J. O’Brien and United States Marine Corps History and Museums Division, *Liberation: Marines in the Recapture of Guam*. Marines in World War II Commemorative Series. (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994).

⁴ Vicente M. Diaz, “Deliberating ‘Liberation Day’: Identity, History, Memory, and War in Guam,” *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*. eds. Takashi Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama. E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 157.

⁵ Anne Perez Hattori, *Righting Civil Wrongs: The Guam Congress Walkout of 1949*, Master’s Thesis, University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 1994.

From 1898 to 1941, there had been 38 appointed naval governors. With the notable exceptions of several acting governors running from 1898-1899, they were all white male servicemen who had been imported from the continental United States. Simultaneously, Chamorros navigated the proper political channels by sending request after request regarding civil rights, in the form of U.S. citizenship, as well as self-governance. In the words of Vanessa Warheit's documentary *Insular Empire*, "The people of Guam truly believed that American democracy would work for them, if only the United States would let them have it. So, starting in 1901, Guam's Chamorro people sent petition after petition to the U.S. Congress, asking for a civilian, American form of government. For 50 years these requests went unanswered."⁶ Akin to the Chamorro advisory council of 1898, the Guam Congress exercised little to no power within the rules set by the all-powerful naval government. For five decades, Chamorros lacked civil rights and a semblance of true self-governance. Generation after generation, local politicians toiled endlessly for these political rights, but to no avail.

By navigating congressional and naval channels within polite parameters, local leaders realized this tactic would achieve nothing. If local politicians really wanted to gain citizenship or pass an organic act, they would have to do the unthinkable. Prompted by two distinct frustrations, they worked up the nerve to take a stand. First, there was immense frustration resulting from Naval Governor Charles A. Pownall's proposed Interim Organic Act. In particular, the document maintained that the governor could still veto any and all decisions made by the Guam Congress. With practically zero changes to

⁶ Vanessa Warheit, *The Insular Empire: America in the Mariana Islands*, New Day Films, 2010.

the political lay of the land, this unnecessary act of virtue signaling was extremely unnerving to members of the Guam Congress. Secondly, the question of whether the Guam Congress could subpoena an American was the straw that broke the camel's back. Both instances incited Chamorro lawmakers to take matters into their own hands. With their assembly passing a bill and petition on the organic act and citizenship, the legislative body unanimously voted to adjourn until Congress took concrete steps in securing an organic act bill for Guam. Such a direct gesture would have been made in vain had it not been for the well-resourced Chamorro assemblyman, Carlos P. Taitano. In funneling this story to visiting newsmen from the United Press International (UPI) and the Associated Press (AP), this violation and denial of political rights could not be kept under wraps any longer. Once national media caught wind of the case, a wave of widespread support developed against the naval government. Eventually, not even President Harry Truman could ignore the protestations of the Chamorro people.

By 1949, Guam was no longer under the totalitarian jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy and had been transferred to the State Department of the Interior. The island also received its first civilian governor, Carlton S. Skinner. On August 1st, 1950, Truman signed the Organic Act into law. As a concerted effort organized and publicized by Chamorro leaders, "the Guam Congress Walkout wasn't an event that sprung from the spontaneous feelings of the leaders of Guam in 1949. It was the climax of half a century of discontent among many Chamorros on Guam."⁷

⁷ Leo Babauta, "Guam Congress Walkout," *Guampedia*, last modified on October 15th, 2019. <https://www.guampedia.com/guam-congress-walkout/>.

The Conditions and Costs of U.S. Citizenship

Despite notable improvements in civil rights as well as self-governance, this newfound citizenship was conditional in nature and limited in scope. As an essential component of the Organic Act, gaining U.S. citizenship seemed like a substantial step towards political progress. And yet, the promise of citizenship was proved quite the phantom menace. Although Chamorros received American passports, they were left with a considerable lack of rights to representation and resources. Even though the U.S. President was Commander-in-Chief of Guam as well, permanent residents on island did not possess the right to vote in presidential elections. Their congressional delegate was also non-voting. Additionally, they lacked access to the same socioeconomic benefits afforded to those in the continental United States. In this way, political wishes of further integration into the U.S. and expanded political rights were not completely met.

Rather than acting on a moral conscience or good intentions, I argue it is more likely the United States was following the trend towards decolonization and national reflection in a postwar world. After World War II, western expansionism was no longer in fashion and highly frowned upon. In witnessing Hitler's fascist campaign to build an Aryan empire, his tactic of acquiring large swathes of land and establishing distant protectorates proved vital to the empire's rapid ascension. Through Nazi Germany's rapid annexation of various territories across Eastern Europe, other Western powers began to rethink their colonial possessions. As the "good guy," the U.S. would come to rethink its imperial past and how to rectify past indiscretions in the Pacific later in the 20th century.⁸

⁸ Quite ironically, it has been argued that the Nuremberg Laws of Nazi Germany were based off American racial policies. For more, see: James Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

However, “America the benevolent, however, does not exist and never has existed.” In recognizing the true nature of American empire, any granting of power or privilege could not challenge the national security, military access, or any other interest of the U.S. nation state.⁹ In the case of Guam’s relationship to the United States, their citizenship status reflected this developing disavowal of outright imperialism. Essentially, the U.S. government had to save face by granting them civil rights or by relinquishing control of the territory in some capacity.

Prior to the Organic Act, Guam was referred to as a “possession” of the United States; afterwards, its official political status is that of an “unincorporated territory.” Regardless of the terminology, Guam was still deprived of true self-governance. In the words of former Governor Eddie Calvo, “To not offend anyone, I guess I’ll keep it as a non-self-governing territory. But I guess in the 19th century sense, you could call it a colony.”¹⁰ Whilst World War II kept Chamorros in a constant state of grateful complacency, the Organic Act sowed seeds of doubt and frustration around American-Chamorro relations. Rather than fully vested American citizens, Chamorros once again found themselves in a liminal space. Leaders, both formal politicians and community organizers, constantly wanted for the people but were at odds with how to procure it. The following section tracks their dual efforts of addressing Guam’s political status and charting paths forward for Guam in the modern age.

⁹ Sidney Lens, *The Forging of the American Empire: From the Revolution to Vietnam: A History of U.S. Imperialism* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 1.

¹⁰ PBS and Infobase, “Island of Warriors,” *American by the Numbers with Maria Hinojosa*, season 1, episode 2, 2018, https://digital-films-com.ecl.idm.oclc.org/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=151356.

Modernization by way of Super Typhoon and Other External Factors

In the words of Chamorro activist, scholar, and politician Robert A. Underwood, “True activism involves generating power where there is none, and challenging ideas and policies.”¹¹ Alongside the stalemate of political status and liminal citizenship, Chamorro activists experienced certain circumstances which encumbered their efforts of achieving sovereignty. One such circumstance was a preoccupation with the island’s economic well-being. In the decade after the passing of Guam’s Organic Act, it became highly evident to famed Guam historians Carano & Sanchez, “... that Guam has made great strides forward in virtually every phase of life. Economically, the people of Guam continued to enjoy the benefits of full employment opportunities... The per capita income was higher than it was during the previous ten years. This resulted in a better standard of living... By 1960, Guam was enjoying a standard of living higher than ever before in the history of the island and perhaps the highest in the Pacific west of Hawaii.”¹² However, natural disasters disrupted this steady stream towards economic prosperity on island. As two of the most powerful super typhoons to strike Guam, Karen (November 1962) and Pamela (May 1976) caused death and destruction. With lives lost, thousands of homes lost, and power sources disrupted, a silver lining lay in this dire need to repair and rebuild. As Rogers observed, “Like Governor Leon Guerrero after Karen in 1963, Ricky Bordallo in 1976 after Pamela saw federal aid not only as an opportunity to reconstruct storm-damaged facilities, but also as a means to improve Guam’s infrastructure and

¹¹ Chloe Babauta, “Activism can be a rough way to enter the political world,” *Pacific Daily News*, October 30th, 2018, <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2018/10/30/activism-can-rough-way-enter-political-world/1816414002/>.

¹² Carano, Paul and Pedro C. Sanchez. “Chapter Ten: Guam Under the Organic Act,” *A Complete History of Guam* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1964), 396-397.

economy.”¹³ With his pie-in-the-sky mentality, late Governor Ricky Bordallo’s proposed “Marshall Plan for Guam” had to be workshopped and reworked. In negotiating within the Guam Legislature, Governor Bordallo received big bucks. Securing approximately \$367 million for typhoon-related services as well as other projects, this funding package was a source of major relief. On top of local affairs, this enormous capital investment also came after two major events proved extremely detrimental to the island’s economy. Firstly, the 1973 oil crisis disrupted a growing tourism industry and the post-Karen rehabilitation program. Second was the temporary but taxing Vietnamese relocation program known Operation New Life. After the Vietnam War, Guam processed over 100,000 Vietnamese refugees from April to November 1975. Whilst Governor Bordallo readily accepted refugees, the U.S. utilized the island beyond its capacity, and in turn strained the livelihoods of Vietnamese refugee and Native host alike.¹⁴

As the “highest federal funding for civil development in Guam’s history for a four-year period,”¹⁵ the Typhoon Pamela relief package was a godsend for commercial development, residential rebuild, and major improvements on public infrastructure. Altogether, the 1960’s and 1970’s culminated in the height of the island’s economic prosperity and modernization, “...complete with bumper-to-bumper traffic and virtually two-cars in every garage, color television in every living room, and modern appliances to ease household chores.”¹⁶ This modernization was instigated and fully supported by

¹³ Rogers, Robert. “Ocean Chrysalis 1970-1980,” *Destiny’s Landfall*, revised edition (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), 235.

¹⁴ Yên Lê Espiritu, “Military Refuge(es),” *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

¹⁵ Rogers, 236.

¹⁶ Sanchez, 403.

federal aid, but two other streams of income reinforced Guam's economic growth and comparative prosperity. As a result of their dual profitability, the military-industrial complex and foreign tourism industry increased in scope and importance. In their role as Guam's key streams of island-wide and individually based income, American (domestic) and Asian (foreign) influence took precedence over Chamorro (local) interests in political and economic matters. On the surface, Guam seemed to be living the so-called American Dream, achieving economic prosperity and modern progress like never before. And yet, Chamorro activists would beg to differ about Guam's economic and political development from the 1970's onward.

Partners in Conflict & Complacency: The Joint Industries of Militarism and Tourism

In their joint ascension to becoming Guam's socioeconomic generators of wealth and status, these two industries bred both dependency and backlash amongst the Chamorros of Guam. Like a toxic relationship between an avid narcissist and a coddling empath, the parasitic quality of the U.S. military's presence on Guam cannot be overstated.¹⁷ Case in point, consider the long, arduous history of military land-takings and refusal to relinquish said stolen property. At its peak occupation in the postwar period, the U.S. military held two thirds of the island under its direct supervision. Despite this rapid accumulation of ancestral lands and private properties, there had been little Chamorro protestation. In addition to a well-known gratitude for defeating their Japanese oppressors, Chamorros were in a tremulous state of transition. Prior to American re-occupation, Chamorros were forced to leave their villages and live in Japanese concentrations instead. A blessing in disguise, they were saved from the American bombing of Agana, which had been Guam's most populous village. After American forces re-captured the island, Chamorros relocated from the Japanese camps to naval rehabilitation centers. Simultaneously, they unknowingly had their land taken from them by their saviors. Over time, Chamorro families were forced to reconcile with the fact they may never get their land back. For some, they never came to collect the lackluster compensation check made out to them by the government. Worse still, some Chamorros underwent the deep loss of their home village, Sumay. In his master's thesis on the history of this Chamorro village that no longer exists, Chamorro scholar James Perez

¹⁷ Rachel Partiali, "The Parasitic Relationship Between a Narcissist and an Empath," *Therapy Route*, March 24th, 2019, <https://www.therapyroute.com/article/the-parasitic-relationship-between-a-narcissist-and-an-empath-by-r-partiali>.

Viernes notes, “Unbeknownst to many Chamorro survivors of the occupation during the immediate postwar period, the U.S. military was taking deliberate and quick action to organize the entire island of Guam as a base from which to initiate attacks against Japan.”¹⁸ Because of its proximity to Apra Harbor, both colonizers recognized the strategic value of Sumay for commercial and combat purposes. In claiming Sumay as their own, American victors forbid former residents from returning to their homes by establishing Naval Base Guam. In the most heartbreaking of ways, the story of Sumay illustrates the distinct possibility of being displaced from one’s homeland, even if its area is only 212 square miles.

To this day, military occupation of ancestral homelands and formerly owned private property remains a contentious topic of conversation. To bring up land issues is to trouble the conception that the benefits outweigh the costs of military presence on island. For a population whose history is entrenched in military service and gratitude, this is a tough sell. In the words of community organizer Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “That’s part of these land issues, in a way the presence of the military here depresses the local economy and exacerbates certain things actually means then it encourages people to join the military to provide some cushion and support to deal with the fact...[It’s a] vicious cycle.”¹⁹ As for the radical idea to give land back to the Chamorro people, this one pushes the envelope because it sparks a discussion of decolonization.

¹⁸ James Perez Viernes, “Fanhasso I Taotao Sumay: Displacement, Dispossession and Survival on Guam,” Master’s Thesis, University of Hawai’i: Manoa, 2008, 57.

¹⁹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, interview by author, July 22nd, 2019.

In terms of the tourist industry buildup on Guam, this business brought the island substantial revenue, but it also picked at a perpetual scab of the Chamorro experience: that of identity formation. Due to constant and consistent deprivation of language, culture, and the norms of pre-colonial Chamorro life, a succeeding seed of doubt and shame would be passed down generation after generation. As a theme in many Indigenous communities handling the trauma of colonization and its ripple effects, shame works to undo the pride of a people. By psychologically pushing Chamorros to perceive themselves as inferior, coupled with harsh dictations at school which forbade the usage of Chamorro in the classroom, many began to internalize feelings of doubt or shame regarding their Chamorro identity. As Chamorro activist Hope Cristobal recounted her personal experience of language suppression to me via email,

“Sinajana Elementary School was directly across our house. There, we were required to speak only English. We were “demerited” pts for being CHamoru, speaking our language. School friends would poke us to get a response in CHamoru! That brought the constant reminder to speak English. And, yes, we were physically punished or embarrassed in the classroom if we spoke CHamoru. Our teacher had us stick out our hands with our fingers together and she’d hit us at the tip of our fingers! It was a rough world for us school kids. After school hours at home (50-feet away from the elementary school we attended), we just simply reverted to be our CHamoru selves—because our NananBiha is at home waiting for us! It seemed natural for us.”²⁰

As a foundational tool of learning and knowing oneself, one’s community, and one’s greater nation, education highly informs self-esteem and identity. In attempting to assimilate Chamorros to American ways of being, thinking, and living, the traditional behaviors and customs of Chamorro life were rendered lesser in quality and quantity with every passing generation. The same thing occurred in the colonial schooling of the

²⁰ Hope Cristobal, email message to author, October 17th, 2020.

Spanish and Japanese eras, in varying degrees of intensity and instruction, but American assimilation was particularly pernicious. Known to be highly effective in its appeals to ethnic and other minority groups, education and other Americanization programs and institutions enable the subject to believe they are capable of acceptance into society, if only they discard unwanted defects (like being an immigrant or indigenous person) in favor of becoming the ideal American citizen.²¹ I digress.

Circling back to the tourism industry on island, several factors exacerbated issues of identity and access on Guam in particular. As a business grounded in advertising what is unique and/or of interest to a visiting party, a tourist destination's success is heavily reliant on marketability. Given its late 20th century start, Guam was already on the path of modernization and its longstanding journey of identity formation via hybridization. At this point, Guam's hybrid sociopolitical atmosphere cast into question many things: How does one explain Guam's relationship to the U.S. to a tourist? Why does Guam look like any other coastal area of the U.S., thousands of miles away, when it is only a three-hour flight from Japan? What sites and attractions does Guam have to offer? And what would prove to be especially crucial, what kinds of cultural practices and forms of entertainment does the island have to offer? Unlike the Hawaiian tourist industry, which was commodifiable, recognizable, and therefore palatable to its tourists, Guam's tourism industry found itself at an interesting crossroads. Instead of appealing to American visitors, who need not take such a long flight to see their own modernized landscape an

²¹ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

ocean away, Guam marketed itself to Asian audiences by highlighting a hybrid American and Pacific Islander identity. Due to its palatable nature, Guam opted for a Polynesian cultural entertainment model. In the eyes of geographer RDK Herman, “The forces of modernity have penetrated nearly every corner of the globe to one degree or another. But we must acknowledge that cultural change does not equate with cultural loss. To the extent that Pacific Islanders appropriated aspects of, shall we call them, the “visitor cultures” results in a hybridity still rooted in place, to greater and lesser extents. And that transfer went both ways.”²²

In turn, Guam’s tourism sector developed an amalgamation of American, and notably Polynesian, amenities and performances for its Asian tourist market to consume. “Where America’s Day Begins” was Guam’s official slogan of the late 20th century, perpetuating a strong desire for Guam to be associated with America when it came to tourism. Moreover, the industry aimed to cater to foreign fantasies of the exotic by basing their entire game plan off of Polynesia. Despite being distinctly different cultures with dissimilar performing arts histories, hotels in Tumon Bay appropriated from various Polynesian dance traditions for their dinner shows. Feeding into this idea of the stereotypical island paradise, Guam’s tourist ventures were generic and unoriginal. This was also evident in the Waikiki-styled Tumon Bay. For Chamorro activist and native language teacher Michael Lujan Bevacqua, this signified a true absence concerning identity and sharing that with the world: “That’s what Chamorros lack: they lack that

²² RDK Herman, “Pacific Worlds: Indigeneity, Hybridity, and Globalization,” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2018), 16. <https://www-jstor-org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.4.2.0014>.

feeling of being a distinct people, having these distinct qualities, and not just this superficial pride. Not this consumeristic pride.” His answer to reclamation and restoration of pride and Chamorro peoplehood? The language. Along the vein of consumerism and broadcasting one’s identity in addition to tourism, Bevacqua shared this nugget of wisdom:

“Anybody can get a shirt, anybody can get a tattoo, anyone can buy a necklace, but the language is hard. You cannot buy the language; you cannot download the language. There is no replacement for the language. And the language is not something you can sell; cultural things you can sell and commodify to outsiders. Your language cannot, which means saving the language and keeping it safe is really like a test as an Indigenous people in your sense of pride, your sense of sovereignty. The language is basically evidence of your story... And so, if you let it die, in a way it is one of the last gasps of your peoplehood.”²³

²³ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, interview by me, Mangilao, July 22nd, 2019.

Grassroots Activism: The 1970's Influence on Tactical & Ideological Shifts

“Guam is not just a piece of real estate to be exploited for its money-making potential. Above all the else, Guam is the homeland of the Chamorro people. That is a fundamental, undeniable truth. We are profoundly “taotao tano” –people of the land. This land, tiny as it is, belongs to us just as surely, just as inseparably, as we belong to it. No tragedy of history or declaration of conquest, no legalistic double-talk can change that. Guam is our legacy. Is it for sale? How can one sell a national birthright?”²⁴

-late Governor Ricky Bordallo

“Some of these politicians are talking about confronting the military and protecting the environment,” he said. “They seem to speak from an activist point of view, but we’ll see if they succeed. And if they do succeed, we’ll see what happens to them.”²⁵

-Robert A. Underwood

In the early stages of Chamorro activism, traditional types of grassroots tactics and strategies were implemented. Through my analysis of the coalitional group PARA-PADA, the 1970's presents the first decade of formal political activism through the formation of sociopolitical organizations. From language revitalization to the Guam Constitution, they fought for both political and cultural sovereignty. In doing so, they harnessed the power of the people to accomplish new feats and set the standard, or rather a precedent, for what strategies did work. In closing this chapter with the work of preliminary activist group PARA-PADA, the third and final chapter will center on capturing late 20th century activism through future groups like OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru. For now, let us return to the recently re-structured Guam of the 1970's.

²⁴ Michael F. Phillips, “Land,” *Kinalamten Pulitikat: Sinenten I Chamorro/Issues in Guam's Political Development: The Chamorro Perspective* (Agana: The Political Status Education Coordinating Commission, 1996), 2.

²⁵ Chloe Babauta, “Activism can be a rough way to enter the political world,” *Pacific Daily News*, October 30th, 2018, <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2018/10/30/activism-can-rough-way-enter-political-world/1816414002/>.

Eventually coalescing to form the joint organization of PARA-PADA, let us first track the formation of PARA. Formed in 1977, the People's Alliance for Responsive Alternatives (PARA) was responsible for organizing such tenacious efforts at language preservation and revitalization in the public sphere. Preceding the height of the self-determination movement, early Chamorro activism of this decade centered on local issues in need of immediate ramification. In the context of language, education, and the media, the Pacific Daily News in its denial to print the Chamorro language. As an age-old policy, certain members of the Chamorro community wondered why that was and focused on how they could reverse it. As the mainstream local newspaper at the time, their role in disseminating information and affecting local mindsets was quite significant. Despite Chamorro being the Native language of Guam, the PDN's disregard for its incorporation into the fine print rendered it useless, obscure, and irrelevant. However, Chamorros like Robert Underwood and Hope Cristobal found fault in that. To test the lengths the PDN was willing to go to protect this prejudiced policy, Robert Underwood applied for a paid advertisement to wish his wife 'happy birthday!' in Chamorro. In refusing to process this request, the Underwood's, Cristobal, and others decided to pressure the PDN. In a politically provocative act of word play, PARA utilized the Chamorro meaning of their name to send a message. The group's acronym, which means "to stop" in Chamorro, was utilized cleverly in their slogan "PARA PDN" to say quite literally "Stop the Pacific Daily News" in the very language unincorporated into the fine print of PDN. As for their grassroots efforts, PARA capitalized on this sentiment of exclusion within their own press and mobilized the community to make a fuss alongside them. From making flyers to organizing marches, this political protest was created by

Chamorros for Chamorros. In her recollection of engaging with the community to make a collective political statement, Saina Cristobal recalls:

We campaigned around the island using a bullhorn mounted on top of a pickup; going to every village! We were able to get some 700 elders to chant and sing in CHamoru as we processed from Latte Park in Hagatna walking in front of the police station and over to the GuamPDN building (now the DNA Bldg)! We collected in front of the building chanting and singing. We then walked into the building, one at a time, and cancelled our newspaper subscription.²⁶

As an act of cultural defiance, the political implications were not unfounded.

Beyond this lack of the Chamorro language in the daily paper, the Pacific Daily News in its reporting was not kind or representative the Chamorro people of Guam. Akin to the implanted nature of Guam's appointed naval governors, the PDN's reporters were not obligated to invest in local affairs despite the power of their role. Often newly graduated journalism students from the continental United States, these recruits had no prior knowledge of Guam or its Indigenous people. With contracts typically 18-months in duration, they did not have the time to develop deeper understandings of the place and people. Moreover, these reporters were not held accountable for their negative portrayal of Chamorros. For Cristobal, the PDN was one key influence undermining the Chamorro community's sense of identity and inherent worth whilst also celebrating the military. In her own words, "We were being steered towards a military supporting community! The paper was devoid of any negative news about the military or their personnel although we all knew of bar fights, rapes and other crime perpetrated by military personnel. However, the front and third pages of the paper is where you'd find all the negative news about the local people... I don't know how we allowed mainstream media to control our worldview

²⁶ Hope Cristobal, Personal email message to author, October 17th, 2020.

as an indigenous people struggling to survive in our tano’! We are the taotaotano’ of Guam!”²⁷ As one extension of their being, prohibition of the Chamorro language in Guam’s most popular publication was essentially a repudiation of the Chamorro people.

Akin to the strong sentiments of their successor Bevacqua and the next generation of cultural bearers, Chamorro language usage and revitalization felt vital to the well-being and mentality of the Chamorro community and was therefore a pressing issue of early Chamorro activism. The historical disbarment of the people from speaking their native tongue led to a widespread generational decline in native speakers. Whilst my grandparents can speak fluent Chamorro as well as English, my parents can understand it but are not fluent, and I only know a couple Chamorro words and phrases. Given this generational gap in fluency, the politics of Chamorro language ebbed and flowed from usage by one generation to reclamation by another. For those invested in language perpetuation, the activist work of the 1970’s was not made in vain. Simultaneous to this movement to protect and preserve the Chamorro language, the Chamorro Language Commission and institutionalization of Chamorro in schools began to gain traction.

In her dissertation on Chamorro identity formation, American scholar Laurel Monnig concluded, “The promotion of Chamorro language in the schools was inherently linked to a Chamorro ‘cultural’ identity and political agenda. The environment was ripe for such strategies, as the Chamorro language became more visible in public formats, such as on television programs and then later in the pages of the PDN. Speaking

²⁷ Ibid.

Chamorro became less and less of what was believed to be a “stigmatized” language, and rather became a language of Chamorro group identity and unity. Rather than a source of ridicule, it became a political identity badge for many of the post-WWII generation of Chamorros.”²⁸ As evidenced by my family’s trajectory towards language estrangement (but not loss), many modern Chamorro families and other ethnic groups on island did not see the immediate payoff of teaching Chamorro in schools. Because it did not ensure gainful employment and was exclusive to the Marianas, unlike the universality of English, there was and remains local disinterest. Again, Bevacqua prods this constituency to recognize the inherent value of one’s native language: “You keep it alive not because there’s money, you keep it alive because it’s yours.”²⁹

As a preliminary part of the the Bilingual-Bicultural education movement on island, the outcome of the PDN protest inspired further acts of Chamorro language usage within other areas of the public sphere. In eventually conceding to the Chamorro people, the PDN would come to print the Chamorro language in the paper. Capitalizing on this success, PARA “later expanded its focus to such areas as the Guam Airport Authority, demanding that signs, already written in English and Japanese, be posted also in Chamoru throughout the airports on Guam and Saipan.”³⁰ Moreover, PARA’s success in garnering the attention of the larger Chamorro community would prove vital in other areas as well.

²⁸ Laurel Anne Monnig, “Proving Chamorro”: Indigenous Narratives of Race, Identity, and Decolonization on Guam,” Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: 2007, 299.

²⁹ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, interview by author, July 22nd, 2019.

³⁰ Laurel Monnig, “PARA-PADA,” Guampedia, last modified September 17th, 2020, <https://www.guampedia.com/para-pada/#:~:text=PARA%2DPADA%20was%20formed%20from,CHamoru%20culture%2C%20history%20and%20language.>

The Formation of Para'Pada Y CHhlorus and the Proposal of a Guam Constitution

As PARA's next major offensive, they targeted the proposed Guam Constitution. Despite consistent efforts of determining Guam's political status, there was a lack of communication and alignment of priorities when it came to Guam's congressional delegate and his conduct in Washington. By lobbying for the local community to write a constitution for their island, Delegate Won Pat's desire was met in December 1976. Authorized by Congress, both Guam and the Virgin Islands could create constitutional conventions in order to draft this document. As an attempt to revise the 1950 Organic Act, the idea of a Guam Constitution was simply a reformative measure and virtually nothing more. As for Chamorro opinion, many community members were left uninformed of the situation. In terms of those who did take a stance, proponents of the Constitution were Delegate Won Pat, some political officials, and Washington. As for the naysayers, this opposition included "Guam's teachers, statesiders, and attorneys" as well as activist groups like PARA PADA.³¹

In contesting the Guam Constitution, PARA found a kindred spirit with another organization known as the People's Alliance for Dignified Alternatives (PADA). Spearheaded by Chamorro activists like Marilyn Manibusan and Tony Leon Guerrero, the group was originally called "The Committee for a More Informed Vote on the Constitution."³² In joining forces, this joint group once again revealed the Chamorro tendency towards humor. In forming Para'Pada Y CHAmorus (also referred to as PARA PADA), their name quite literally meant, "stop slapping the CHAmorus."

³¹ Rogers, 241.

³² Monnig, PARA-PADA.

For Chamorro activist groups, namely PARA PADA, the Guam Constitution in its various iterations was still not enough. In its dissatisfactory approach to immigration, the military, and the Department of Interior, there was widespread confusion as to the point of the Constitution. As evidenced by the outcome, both constitutional conventions failed to gain majority support. Colloquially referred to as ConCon, the first constitutional convention took place from June 1st, 1969 until June 29th, 1970. Sponsored by Chamorro senator Richard F. Taitano, this first attempt was founded through the passage of Public Law 9-244, funded by the 10th Guam Legislature, and focused on addressing and revising the 1950 Organic Act. Out of 34 recommended revisions, only one was taken into consideration. Overall, the first ConCon had little tangible impact and fell along lines of reform rather than creating actual change concerning the island's political status.

Before the second ConCon took place, another factor of frustration was added into the mix. Due to the ceaseless efforts of activists and politicians, the lack of change incited both fatigue and frustration. These feelings were also shared by majority of the Chamorro people, who either wanted closer ties with the U.S. or to branch off and become a Commonwealth or gain independence. Contrary to Guam's political development, the Northern Marianas received a speedier route to citizenship and a loosened grip on their island affairs after starting negotiations with Washington at the end of 1972. Unlike the agonizingly slow process of political decision-making on Guam and in Washington, their northern neighbors had seemingly no trouble in securing their political future. For obvious reasons, the Chamorros on Guam were outraged.

Stemming from a longer history of possible reunification, pre-existing tensions between Guam and the Northern Marianas were exacerbated by this reality. Ironically, the Chamorros of the Northern Marianas had once possessed an intense desire to reunify with Guam after several polls (conducted from 1958 to 1969) demonstrated a majority favored abandoning these geopolitical boundaries. Postwar bitterness, economic well-being, and other beliefs held by Chamorros on Guam prevented this from occurring in a single special referendum in November 1969.³³ In another instance of low voter turnout (32%), a sizeable majority (58%) of the populace rejected the possibility of reunification of the Marianas. As stated above, the original resentment harbored by Chamorros of Guam was compounded by the mid-70's because of their wildly differing relations with the United States as well as political status trajectories. In fact, "It had taken less than three years of negotiations once they began in December 1972 for the people of the CMI to be accepted for American citizenship... In contrast, it had taken the people of Guam nearly fifty years to accomplish the same goal."³⁴ As an act of karmic retribution, seeing this expeditious route to citizenship illustrated by their northern cousins propelled Chamorro politicians and activists alike to seriously consider their next steps forward.

Rolling around the summer of 1977, the second ConCon concluded by the fall with a draft constitution which would "redefine the island's relationship with the US rather than merely modifying the existing relationship."³⁵ Instead of reforming the

³³ Camacho, Keith. "World War II in the Marianas," *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 39-58.

³⁴ Rogers, 234.

³⁵ Josh Tenorio and James Perez Viernes, "Guam Constitutional Conventions (ConCon)," Guampedia, last modified September 17th, 2020, <https://www.guampedia.com/guam-constitutional-conventions-concon/>.

Organic Act like the first draft, this second attempt was purportedly “an excellent constitution based on the latest models in the U.S. states.”³⁶ For Chamorro activist organizations, that was simply not the case.

According to PARA-PADA, the Guam Constitution was an empty gesture lacking in a kind of substance desperately needed at the time. Although its creation was initiated by local politicians, its cultivation at the federal level never took into consideration the demands and desires of the people. As the second draft did little to address immigration or the responsibility of U.S. authorities’ responsibilities to Guam and its people, it was deemed an unnecessary distraction which prevented genuine work from being done. Moreover, the looming question of political status was still waiting in the wings. As an extensive document supported by GovGuam and Washington, battling this behemoth would be a trying task. To organize on an effective, continuous basis, PARA PADA grounded themselves in knowledge of the document itself as well as Guam’s political history. According to Saina Cristobal, they would then disseminate the information to the people in hopes of stopping the Guam Constitution from coming into fruition”

“I became a part of the PARA (People’s Alliance for Responsible Alternatives) movement to stop the Guam Constitution... We worked hard to produce posters and leaflets and, went village to village and campaigned to educate the people about a Guam Constitution that wasn’t. U.S. Congress had dictated what we could and couldn’t do in our Constitution! We realized that we were writing a constitution without a foundation status. We campaigned with the slogan, Keep Our Options Open! We educated our people that it was all backwards! For how could we write all the rules of our “house” and build it without any foundation? We were an unincorporated territory! And that is NO status at all.”³⁷

Highly evident in her personal testimony, Saina Cristobal’s participation was proof of her passion for political sovereignty. Attesting to PARA PADA’s penchant for

³⁶ Rogers, 240.

³⁷ Hope Cristobal, mail message to author, October 17th, 2020.

political critique and pressure, she also referenced the group's reliance on history and education. Exemplified by the image featured on the following page, PARA-PADA organized to educate, and educated to prevent. Taking a firm stance of resolute rejection on the constitution, their brightly colored flyers are chock full of several leading questions which are posed to each end in a definitive "NO!" and succinct answer as to why below. Their most pressing reason is that a constitution would negatively impact Guam's political trajectory and gridlock the island into their current status for the foreseeable future. In the spirit of their slogan, PARA-PADA strongly believed voting no on a constitution would enable the people to keep their options open.

When it came time for the people of Guam to vote, the results of the 1979 referendum revealed widespread dissatisfaction and indifference to the status quo. Evidenced by both low voter turnout (47%) and a majority no vote (nearly 82%), even a UN report confirmed this. In both influencing and echoing this atmosphere of unrest, PARA-PADA truly operated as a voice of the people. Due to their success with the PDN protests and grassroots approach to community organizing, they became one of the island's most well-known activist group of the 1970's. Moreover, their ideology and tactics caught the attention, admiration, and acceptance of Chamorros in their mission to prevent a Guam Constitution from passing into law. In due time, PARA PADA also operated as an early predecessor of later Chamorro rights organizations which would develop later in the 20th century. Because of Guam's local environment and the tangible impact grassroots activism could have on the community and political development, Chamorro activist organizations would grow in number and intensity from here on out.

Chapter 3:
Divergent Visions of Indigenous Futurity:
The Evolution of Chamorro Activism throughout the 20th Century

“.. from a long-term perspective, which is the best kind of historical outlook, what is of more importance is how people, ordinary people, the forgotten people of history, have coped and are coping with their harsh realities, their resistance and struggles to be themselves and hold together...

In order to bring to centre stage grassroots resistance and other unnoticed but important events for our peoples, we must refocus our historical reconstructions on them and their doings... Let others do their reconstructions of our pasts... But we must have histories—our roots and identities—that are our own distinctive creations.”

-Epeli Hau'ofa, “Pasts to Remember”¹

In returning to the parked car conversation with my mom last year, I also wanted to gauge her views and adolescent understanding of Chamorro activism. Did she approve of their message, their tactics? What was it like to grow up in an era marked with increasing political engagement on Guam? At one point, we got to the topic of Chamorro nationalist Angel Santos. Considered Guam’s most infamous or prolific contemporary activist, depending on your politics, my mom recognized him as a distinctly radical figure. Whilst she understood the fight for Chamorro rights, she did not understand his tactics and considered them aggressive. Speaking on behalf of a large proportion of the Chamorro community, my mom was referring to Angel Santos’ notorious moment of spitting on a member of the military. After jumping the fence of a military-owned property, Santos was subdued and arrested. Throughout the altercation, he decided to spit on the person who arrested him. In light of the Chamorro value of inafa’maolek, this

¹ Epeli Hau'ofa. “Pasts to Remember,” *We are the Ocean* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2008), 65.

altercation caused quite the scandal.² Immediate controversy regarding force and respect between the two individuals as well as the political implications of such a blatantly pointed action arose. As one distinct point in the evolution of Guam's political activism during the late 20th century, Santos' act attested to the diversity of thought and action taken by various individuals and groups. Within an ever-growing community of purposeful political engagement, Santos was exemplary of the more brash and abrasive period of activism during the 1990's. A decade prior, this spitting scandal would have received even greater public defamation given the politeness and complacency of the polity during the 1980's. To encapsulate consistent characteristics and changes to the fabric of Chamorro activism on Guam, this third and final chapter recounts the trajectories of two Chamorro activist organizations: Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R) and Nasion Chamoru. Sitting at opposite ends of the spectrum, each organization charted their own path based on their preferred projections of what Guam's future could be. On the surface, it would be easy to write one off as simply the antithesis of the other; however, that is not the case. Operating within the circumstantial limits of the modern world they found themselves in, they both clung to grassroots tactics tested and proven successful by their predecessors. Moreover, they also shared a penchant for seeking solidarity with other Indigenous peoples. Despite how disparate the ideologies and tactics of these groups might appear, there was an underlying interconnectedness: continuing to fight the good fight of obtaining Chamorro sovereignty. For this chapter, I employ a compare and contrast model for analysis.

² Lilli Perez-Iyechad, "Inafa'maolek: Striving for Harmony," Guampedia, last modified December 21st, 2019, [https://www.guampedia.com/inafamaolek/#:~:text=The%20phrase%20inafa'%20maolek%20\(pronounced,'good'%20\(maolek\).](https://www.guampedia.com/inafamaolek/#:~:text=The%20phrase%20inafa'%20maolek%20(pronounced,'good'%20(maolek).)

The Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R)

Founded in 1981, OPI-R was an activist organization composed of both Chamorro and settler ally members committed to addressing Guam's continued colonial status. It also featured recurring characters, like Hope Cristobal and Robert Underwood, who may be to blame for the never-ending wordplay of Chamorro activist group acronyms. Carrying on the tongue-in-cheek linguistic legacy of Para-Pada Y Chamorus, the first part of OPI-R resembles the Chamorro word *oppe* means "to answer" or "to speak out." During its late 20th century tenure, OPI-R became a premier example of courteous Chamorro activism. In living up to their name, the group certainly spoke not only their truth, but on behalf of the Chamorro people, in their quest for self-determination.

A defining characteristic of OPI-R's type of Chamorro activism was its dual emphasis on lived experience and learned historical knowledge. As the group made routine appearances at U.S. Congressional Hearings and United Nations Special Committee Sessions, members showcased their expertise in historical, as well as legal, scholarship to support their claims. By composing compelling personal and historical narratives to justify their ideology, these forward-facing tactics revolved around gaining widespread support at home and abroad. In pamphlets to the public and speeches to governmental bodies, OPI-R consistently spoke to the long-time deprivation of civil and human rights alike, which were supposedly guaranteed to Chamorros by the bastion of American democracy. As Chamorro sociologist Michael Perez puts it, "Since the 1970's, the Chamorro intelligentsia played an especially central role in explicitly developing new

strategies of resistance that took the U.S. to task on its own constitutional principles.”³ Moreover, the organization’s public speakers possessed the ability to firmly and finely articulate their message at formal political forums in addition to organizing protests and marches. This is not to say one had to meet prerequisites or graduate from college to be an OPI-R member, but a good number of them tended to come from an educated background. Whether attending the University of Guam or stateside institutions, they amassed deeper knowledge and adopted new modes of critical thinking from which to process the present. For those who studied in the continent, their relocation would shape new understandings of home and activism upon return.

In the case of Hope Cristobal, her diversity of experience in the continent offered insights based on context and capacity. In her first trip abroad, teenage Cristobal traveled to both coasts as Miss Guam to take part in the Miss Universe pageant. In Washington D.C., she had met the Secretary of the Interior, not realizing until later this meeting occurred, “because Guam is being administered under the Department of Interior, just like the Indians and all the endangered species.”⁴ As for her trip to the Bay Area, she says, “When we got to San Francisco, you know I looked around and I just wondered what the fuss was all about. We didn’t have those kinds of things happening in Guam.”⁵ In this preliminary trip, Cristobal began to draw lines of distinction between that of the Chamorro experience (mass enlistment in the U.S. military after graduating high school) and that of the American experience (participating in political demonstrations).

³ Michael P. Perez, “Contested Sites: Pacific Resistance in Guam to U.S. Empire,” *Amerasia Journal* vol. 27, no. 1 (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 100.

⁴ Warheit.

⁵ Ibid.

Evidenced her extended stay in the States years later, Cristobal underwent a departure from innocence surrounding ideas of education, race, and politics. Reflecting on this point in her life in her email interview with me, she recalls, “Much of my political awareness came as a result of my education at the University of Guam but not until after I experienced discrimination in America. My husband and I lived in Pullman, Washington during his junior and senior year of college. We once were in an auto accident when the police officer uttered a comment that, you Indians need to learn how to drive.’ After my husband earned his degree in Architecture in the States, we returned to Guam with our daughter in 1972... I returned to UOG as a part time student on a scholarship for working mothers. I earned a Bachelor’s degree in General Science and later, a Masters of Education at UOG.”⁶ As one of OPI-R’s prominent spokespeople, Cristobal’s lived and learned wisdom was truly an asset to the organization.

Propelled by personal experiences from a plethora of backgrounds, OPI-R represented a new generation of Chamorros whose pre-existing resentment of U.S.-Guam relations was further amplified by their access to higher education. Furthermore, the group also included people, “from all walks of life, of different ethnic groups, religious and political beliefs, and political status preference.”⁷ Because of this, the non-profit organization’s purpose did not claim to be proponents of Chamorro nationalism, for their purpose was not to reach a definitive conclusion like independence or statehood. In fact, they clearly state, “OPI-R as an organization does not advocate independence or political

⁶ Hope Cristobal, email message to author, October 17th, 2020.

⁷ Organization of People for Indigenous Rights, *Self-Determination: A People's Right* (Tamuning, Guam: OPI-R, 1983), 2.

separation from the United States... However, the organization is firmly united by one belief. This belief is that political self-determination for Guam inheres in the people of Guam who have been denied political self-fulfillment for over three hundred years.”⁸ As a result of their chosen positionality, the multi-faceted nature of the organization was both cause for celebration and controversy to the public of Guam.

On one hand, the group was not radical enough for Chamorro nationalists due to their open-ended stance on Guam’s political status. However, this mindset was not only a minority opinion at the time, but there would later exist a space (Nasion Chamoru) for such sentiments; until then, there was not cause for concern. On the flip side of the coin, the true point of division lay in OPI-R’s stout belief that only the Chamorro people should be able to decide the island’s fate. Commonly referred to as “the right to self-determination,” this proposed plan of political maneuvering naturally excluded other ethnic groups from political participation. Even families who lived on Guam for generations would be unable to contribute their opinions because they did not possess genealogical ties to the island. Because the self-determination movement was focused on seeking reparations for Guam’s Indigenous people first and foremost, this push for a Chamorro-only vote incurred harsh criticism: “racist,” “un-American,” “communist,” and many other derogatory terms were directed towards the movement itself and affiliated organizations.

Despite all the negative press and hearsay, OPI-R’s reliance on records of historical transgressions made against Chamorros as well as their solid background in

⁸ Ibid., 8.

academic argumentation enabled them to handle such inflammatory remarks from a place of Indigenous reckoning. As recorded in Guam scholar Laurel Monnig's dissertation "Proving Chamorro," Robert Underwood's approach to assuaging Chamorro anxieties and reasoning with automatic assumptions of racism speaks to OPI-R as an organization as well:

"Issues of race and immigration were multi-faceted. First of all, on the basis of immigration, you know, I have a tendency which I still do, which has served me well, is to try to take an issue of concern and try to explain it in broader terms so that we can have a deeper understanding of it. So I still feel very proud of my contribution in the sense that I was able to provide intellectual strength and fiber to these issues that people felt in an emotional way, but were cut off as not having a legitimate outlet in which to speak. And by being viewed as illegitimate, that the emotions that they felt were illegitimate. So that if a guy went down to the store, and he notices that there's all different kinds of people there, and he no longer feels like this is his homeland, and he now feels that he is a stranger in his own home, that that is not a legitimate feeling.

But given the nature of American ideology about immigration and the strength that it adds to the fiber of American society, you were intellectually cut off from being able to express that. So, that every time you expressed it. the only way that people would interpret it is you're just being a racist, that's why you felt that way. If you were just broad-minded, you wouldn't have those feelings. But of course, it was a canard, because the issue was not whether you were broad-minded or narrow-minded. The issue is well, you have these feelings. Is it legitimate, is it validated by your objective experience[?] Is there something at work that's making you lose control of your future, and is that what's at work? So it was easy, and of course because a lot of Caucasians who were coming to Guam, and who continue to come and go, are able to explain the argument in terms that they find familiar, it makes it difficult to fit your argument onto that. And whenever you try to, it was instantly delegitimated, and as a consequence, people felt boxed out. So they all walked away feeling, "Well, I must be feeling something that is illegitimate, and I can't say it in polite company." So that's the problem.

So I tried to give it life by saying that people have a legitimate right to express themselves and to be able to control their future. There's nothing illegitimate. If you have this rate of immigration into Texas, people would be in a panic, they would be panicking in the streets. But the fact is you don't have this high rate that you have here in Guam. It's not an issue about immigrants themselves. It's not that we don't like these people or that these people are unwelcome, but the issue is that rapid change by its very nature causes the dislocation. So people have the legitimate right to make their sentiments known and to try and affect public policy to do so."⁹

⁹ Monnig, "Proving Chamorro," 333.

By addressing all affected parties and outlying circumstances, Underwood thoughtfully explains how he crafted his counterarguments in a calm and careful, but ultimately productive, manner. Although an uncomfortable conversation, his matter-of-fact attitude afforded legitimacy to Chamorro emotions of displacement. At the intersection of race and immigration, there were periodic influxes of Asian, particularly Filipinx, immigrants (who both settled on Guam long term and eventually relocated to the continental U.S.) as well as haole statesiders (who came as solo servicemen or in military family units). Despite still being the largest ethnic group of Guam's population, Chamorros were growing increasingly estranged and dislodged from the island they called home. On OPI-R's part, their battle revolved around contextualizing the longer fight for self-governance, if not sovereignty, which existed prior to contemporary waves of foreign immigration or military personnel. Along the lines of spokesman Underwood, applying an overly simplistic U.S. binary racial framework of to the complex colonial history of the island misconstrues the aims of the self-determination movement. As exemplified by the police officers's belief that Cristobal and her husband were Indians who could not drive, the continent's strict racial categories, along with their differing connotations, could not easily translate over to Guam's ethnic melting pot and political environment.

To mobilize local support, OPI-R engaged in standard tactics like handing out leaflets, making petitions, and lobbying on behalf of Chamorro interests. They had a knack for utilizing cultural insignia like ancient Chamorro carvings from pottery and cave dwellings in addition to the art of political cartoons. Albeit simplistically rendered the

messages espoused by these cartoons were quite provocative. In one instance, Image 1.5, the political cartoon accosts the reader to be an independent thinker, to dream. In an era where Guam was under constant modernization, telling someone to do so was not only funny but could potentially lead them to consider alternatives to their current beliefs or assumptions about Guam's political status. In Image 1.4, the other political cartoon featured below, the island of Guam stands prisoner behind the bars of U.S. imperialism. Depicted as a "political prisoner" of the "cell block federal system," these political cartoons expressed strong views which, regardless of the reader's beliefs, were sure to ignite a reaction and potentially reflection. From featuring ancestral drawings at the beginning of their informative pamphlets to illustrating stand-alone messages geared towards a 1980's audience, OPI-R was able to garner communal interest for all types of Chamorros, young and old alike. To grasp its impact, the next couple pages will include examples OPI-R's textual and visual media.

MARCH **For** INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

- March to the GOVERNOR'S HOUSE to Request a SPECIAL SESSION of the LEGISLATURE For the INDIGENOUS VOTE For POLITICAL SELF- DETERMINATION
- REMEMBER, it is OUR LEGAL, INALIENABLE RIGHT which we must Get the LEGISLATURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE.

Saturday 2:00 P.M.

JAN. 16, 1982

**LATTE STONE PARK
(AGANA)**

OPPE

(To Respond)

Published by:
The Organization of People
for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R)
P.O. Box 7932
Tamuning, Guam 96911

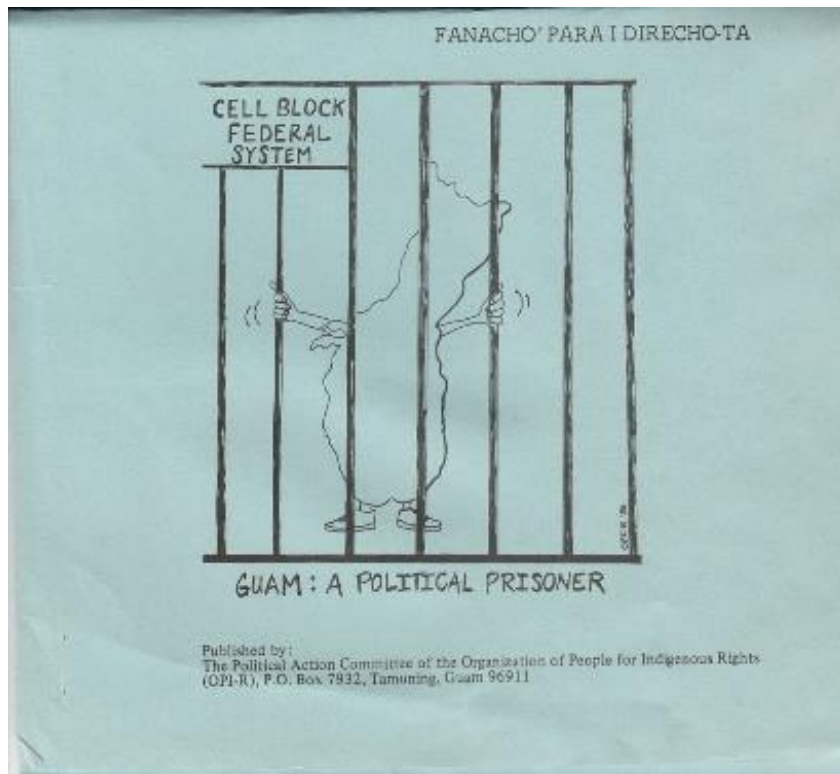


Pottery fragment adopted by OPI-R as official logo

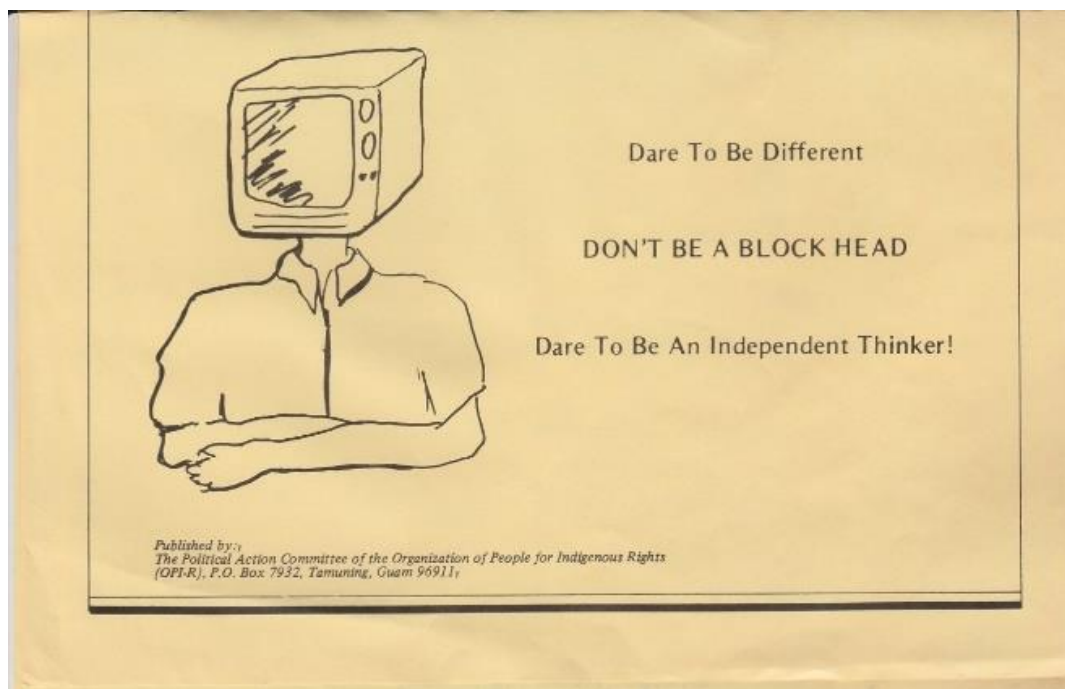
Hafa Adai:

OPI-R is a non-profit, civic organization concerned with the issue of self-determination (the right of a people to determine the way in which they shall be governed and whether they shall be self-governed or governed by another power). Our membership and support consist of individuals from a variety of ethnic groups, professions and political philosophies. On one issue we are strongly united—we firmly believe that only the Chamorro people, the native people of Guam—have the right to alter Guam's status from a non self-governing territory to one considered as having a full measure of self-government.

1.3 OPI-R Pamphlet Cover, “Oppe (To Respond),”
courtesy of Hope Cristobal, date unknown.



1.4 OPI-R Political Cartoon, “Guam: A Political Prisoner,” courtesy of Hope Cristobal, date unknown.



1.5 OPI-R Political Cartoon, “Dare To Be Different,” courtesy of Hope Cristobal, date unknown.

In addition to these local efforts, OPI-R was firm in its aspirations of obtaining aid from any and all sources. To gain more outside exposure and develop allyships, OPI-R was adamant about sharing the plight of the Chamorro people in front of local, national, and international institutions as well as through formal engagement with other Indigenous peoples. This is where their educational background came into play, especially at well-known, prestigious venues like the United Nations. Prior to OPI-R's initiative to speak at the international level, Guam had been an annual topic of discussion, albeit one-sided. From the 1980's onward, OPI-R made it a tradition to offer testimonies at the UN's Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24), with their first formal request to appear before the Fourth Committee submitted 28th September, 1989 centering on "the Question of Guam."¹⁰ On a national level, OPI-R would present their feelings and findings at several U.S. instrumentalities, especially by addressing its overseeing office, the Department of the Interior. Convening in the late 1980's to discuss the possibility of a Guam Commonwealth Act, OPI-R again stressed the historical grounds, as well as renewed support from the community, towards protecting the Chamorro right to self-determination. Early skepticism from established politicians to the general public transformed into widespread awareness, if not acceptance, of OPI-R's purpose which the group took great pride in.

In a 1989 address to the U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on Insular and International Affairs, OPI-R representative Ron Rivera insisted, "The principle of Chamorro-determination is a simple one... It firmly believes that the right to exercise

¹⁰ Ronald Franquez Teehan, "Question of Guam: request for hearing," *letter to Chairman of the 4th Committee, General Assembly, 44th sess. Of United Nations, September 28th, 1989.*

self-determination and the sovereignty it implies is an historical right borne of the direct denial of Chamorro control of their homeland caused by the exchange of colonial systems between Spain and the United States in 1898... To undermine Chamorro self-determination is to give life to imperialism at a time when we are celebrating its demise in other parts of the world.”¹¹ By addressing the root cause of the issue before Guam’s current administrators, the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, OPI-R was a staunch advocate of historical redress. Until the powers that be acknowledge America’s not-so-distant past of unjust territorial expansion, and in turn secure the Chamorro right to self-determination above all else, there should be no forward momentum on Guam’s political status. The well-educated faction of Chamorro activism popularized by the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights would carry on into the 21st century, carrying on its legacy of navigating formal political channels and advocating on behalf of the Chamorro people by connecting the historical with the personal.

A Note on Local Politics & Formal Endeavors to Achieve Self-Determination

Simultaneous to the efforts of OPI-R, Governor Ricky Bordallo was also putting in the work to uplift the Chamorro community. In his two terms as Maga’lahi (1975-1979, 1983-1987), Bordallo himself became something of an “icon for indigenous self-determination”¹² alongside his penchant for island beautification and cultural pride.

Fondly reminiscing on his green thumb, my mom’s Uncle Ricky would finely prune the

¹¹ Ron Rivera, *Hearing Before the Subcommittee On Insular And International Affairs on the Guam Commonwealth Act*, HR 98, Guam Commonwealth Act, 101st Cong., 1st sess., December 12th, 1989, 256-257.

¹² Rogers, 265.

trees and do general landscaping himself at Skinner Plaza.¹³ Overcoming a recession, a super typhoon, and other hang-ups of the late 1970's, his first term was difficult and he was not re-elected until 1982. In his second term, Bordallo took charge of political matters by chairing the Commission for Self-Determination and spearheading the drafting of the Guam Commonwealth Act.¹⁴ Unfortunately, his legacy was tarnished after rumors of fraud and corruption turned into countless counts of federal crimes including extortion, bribery, obstruction of justice, witness tampering, and various conspiracy and wire fraud charges. Anything but innocent, his good intentions to finance new housing and infrastructure resulted in multi-million-dollar bonds as well as exorbitant campaign donations with sketchy scammers masquerading as businessmen. This, on top of excessive investment in fancy buildings and other public projects deemed unnecessary by his Republican opponents, stirred the pot of controversy and turned rumors and speculation into legitimate indictments. Although eight of his convictions had been dropped on account of the prosecutor's overzealous nature, the damage had already been done; Bordallo would face four years in a California federal prison to serve his time.

On January 31st, 1990, merely three hours prior to his scheduled flight, Bordallo took one last stand. Chaining himself to a statue of his predecessor, Chief Quipuha (another fallen leader, who is remembered for befriending Spanish missionaries and failing fellow Chamorros), he shrouded himself in a Guam flag and brought along handmade signs expressing a handful of sentiments. Forgiveness, justice, and love for his homeland all figuring into his final message, the late governor died by suicide after

¹³ Christina Lupola, interview with author, Oceanside, March 21st, 2021.

¹⁴ Nicholas Y. Quinata and Shannon J. Murphy. "Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo," *Guampedia*, last modified October 15th, 2019, <https://www.guampedia.com/governor-ricardo-j-bordallo/>.

squeezing the trigger of a .38-caliber pistol against his right temple, dying later at the U.S. Naval Hospital at the age of sixty-three. As clinical psychologist Dr. Elsie Woodyard put it, “Wrapping himself in a Guam flag and chaining himself to that particular statue before he shot himself was his way of telling us something... After all, think of the loss of face he has suffered.”¹⁵

In a life chock full of deep suffering as well as immense joy and success, let us remember late Governor Ricky Bordallo in all his complexity. Due to my personal relations and sincere belief in his good intentions for the island, I retroactively return to him quite frequently. In his own way, Ricky Bordallo projected his vision for Guam yet found himself wrapped up in controversy and turmoil at the end. By pondering his life through the lens of Indigenous futurisms, may we envision a future in which our political leaders are not led down similar roads and that he be remembered for his longer legacy of love for his island and his people. Despite everything, no one could deny his passion for Guam’s projected path towards political progress and modern development. Best exemplified by his love for the island through his habit of horticulture, “... He was often seen in T-shirt and denims on the weekends trimming manzanita trees in downtown Agana. He continued to trim the trees even as his political world came tumbling down.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Shannon Babauta, “Psychologist suggests death was statement,” *Pacific Daily News*, February 1st, 1990, 3.

¹⁶ Ron Ige, “Bordallo known as dreamer, builder: Lived life of triumph and loss,” *Pacific Daily News*, February 1st, 1990, 3.



1.6 Statue of Chief Kepuha/Quipuha, derived from a post on Chief Kepuha, Historic Walking Tour, Guam, the “Bucket List” Blog, from traveblog.org

Nasion Chamoru & the Incomparable Angel Santos

Inheriting this tumultuous reality of an island in flux, the beginning of the 1990's set the stage for a new kind of political activism. In the summer of July 1991, a conglomeration of grassroots and family-based organizations met at the Latte Stone Memorial Park in Agana. Within the circle of giant latte stones, living monuments which attested to Guam's ancient Chamorro heritage, a mixture of signees, supporters, and witnesses from both Chamorro and non-Chamorro backgrounds assembled to collectively assert and recognize the right of Chamorros to exist as a nation. Heralded by the soon-to-

be notorious Angel Leon Guerrero Santos, this spiritual and symbolic ceremony resulted in the culmination of the United Chamoru Chelus for Independence. This preliminary organization would eventually blossom into one of Guam’s most well-known and controversial Chamorro organizations, Nasion Chamoru.

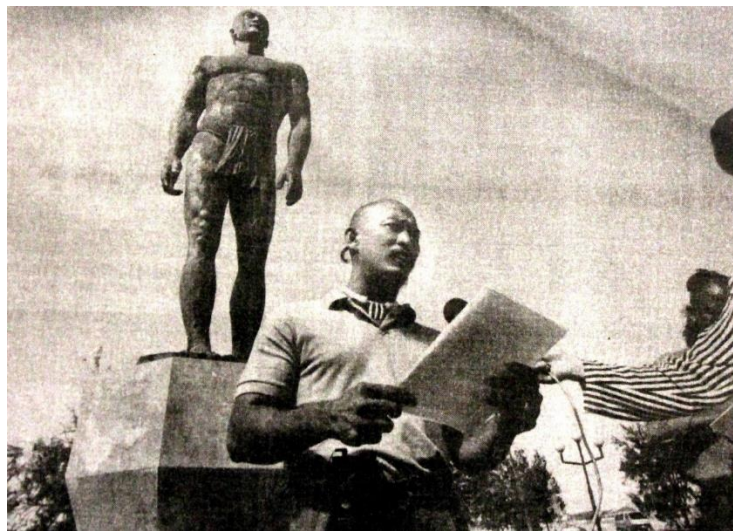
As polar opposites, OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru represented two completely different segments of the Chamorro population and espoused extremely different tactics and ideologies. Whilst OPI-R was “led largely by academics, business people, and others with much of the old elite *manak’kilo* and *taotao ge’hilo*’ image,” Nasion Chamoru functioned under a “low-status *manak’papa*” framework.¹⁷ Repudiating the power and privilege inherent to a well-connected and well-resourced organization like OPI-R, Nasion Chamoru represented themselves as the powerless and disenfranchised. As “Chamorros who were landless, who did not have college degrees, who were low-income—these were the people from which Nasion Chamoru derived its symbolic strength.”¹⁸ Due to this widening divide, the end goal of Nasion Chamoru extended far beyond that of OPI-R; their aim to solidify Chamorros as nation innately distanced them from the U.S. nation-state, a relationship OPI-R attempted not to sever in their political discourse.

Under the leadership of its first *Maga’lâhi* Angel Santos, Nasion Chamoru was a wide-sweeping organization which would come to embody the most radical form of Chamorro nationalism. From the beginning, they dipped their toes into an assortment of topics which affected the everyday Chamorro: land dispossession, environmental

¹⁷ Rogers, 266.

¹⁸ Michael Lujan Bevacqua, “Nasion Chamoru,” *Guampedia*, last modified on October 13th, 2019, <https://www.guampedia.com/nasion-chamoru/>.

degradation, spiritual depletion, cultural loss, veterans' affairs, racial strife, identity crisis, immigration; the list goes on and on. In addressing such a wide scope of island affairs, the organization's push for nationhood incorporated strong references to ancient customs. Whereas OPI-R's focal point of return rest on the pivotal year of 1898, Nasion Chamoru relived the glory days of a colonization-free Guam by "incorporating interpretations of ancient culture into their daily lives and rituals."¹⁹ This included reconnecting with the spirits of their ancestors (which we call *taotaomo'na* or the "before people") at sacred sites for guidance as well as dressing the part. From Chamorro men styling their hair in the ancient way (shaved all the way around with the exception of a long topknot ponytail) to dressing in loincloths and wearing *sinahi* necklaces, symbology and physical presentation proved essential. Take for example this prolific photo of Angel Santos standing before the Chief Kepuha statue:



1.7 "Angel Santos of the group Nasion Chamoru at a demonstration in front of the Chief Kepuha Statue in Hagatna," sumahi.tumblr.com, date unknown.

¹⁹ Ibid.

In light of Nasion Chamoru's proposed return to the old way and championing of Chamorro customs, they were often at odds with the community's recent tradition of non-confrontational conduct. For centuries, Chamorros outlasted colonizer after colonizer. From extensive Spanish rule to short-lived Japanese occupation, it was American military rule and subsequent civilian governance which proved the most pernicious in enabling acceptance of the island's political stasis. This is not to render Chamorros as a complacent people, but to recognize their efforts were quelled decade after decade. Their rebellious streak was not broken, as there exist many cases and stories of outright resistance. One need only research the Spanish-Chamorro Wars²⁰ or the collective Chamorro protection of American sailor George Tweed²¹ to realize this. However, to weather the storm since the onset of colonization, they could not launch massive counterattacks or mass resistance. To put it simply, they had to had to survive. Among many other characteristics, to be Chamorro is to survive.

With this in mind, new times called for measures. Due to Guam's seemingly never-ending purgatory of a political status, it had finally reached a point of departure: a neocolonial entity. To be or not be. Like a snake shedding its skin, American presence on Guam in the late 20th century would never reach a point of decolonization; it only shifted from outright conventions of dominance to more covert, modern kinds of coloniality. As understood by Chamorro sociologist Michael P. Perez notes, "...persistent U.S. neocolonial conditions involve political status and subordination, second-class citizenship, lack of local control of in-migration, land acquisition, cultural erosion and

²⁰ "Spanish-Chamorro Wars," *Guampedia*, last modified on October 27th, 2020, <https://www.guampedia.com/wars-and-factors-of-peace/spanish-chamorro-wars/>.

²¹ Leo Babauta, "George Tweed," *Guampedia*, last modified on December 20th, 2020, <https://www.guampedia.com/george-tweed/>.

Americanization. Moreover, U.S. neocolonialist discourse advocates romanticized ideals of democracy and human rights, while violating and justifying the violation of those very principles.”²² For this very reason, the joint arrival of neocolonialism and the restless energy of the 1990’s required a new and inventive approach to Chamorro activism.

As recipients of their ancestors’ will power to survive, Nasion Chamoru maintained formidable commitment to their principles and execution of their objectives. In a period of relative peace, the organization, the organization was able to exercise various forms of direct action without the threat of massively grave repercussions. In this way, Nasion Chamoru’s tactics were equally disruptive to the local and federal systems of power as well as the status quo perpetuated by their countrymen. Its social implications, namely within the Chamorro community, would prove especially impactful.

For the stereotypical, modern Chamorro, identifying with American culture and avoiding confrontation with authorities was not only customary but encouraged. Even the most courageous acts of previous generations were often made on the down low or on a small scale, in comparison to mass movements around the globe. So as to avoid any aggression or impending violence on the part of their colonizers. As a result, passivity became second nature to Chamorros, as, “they rarely openly resisted such [denigrating] treatment, choosing quiet and passive resistance over direct or politically motivated confrontations.”²³ In living through three different colonizers, varying in benevolence and brutality, surviving alone was an act of resistance. Although in a restive state, the Chamorros of mid-century. This is not to say Chamorro activists were any less dedicated

²² Michael P. Perez, “Contested Sites: Pacific Resistance in Guam to U.S. Empire,” *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Oxfordshire: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 100.

²³ Bevacqua, “Nasion Chamoru.”

to their cause compared to other movements; it was just a consequence of their colonization. Unlike other colonies or outposts of U.S. military control, like the Philippines for example, Guam could not and would not venture into more overt, violent tactics or taking up of arms. Under Luis Munoz Marin's comparison of colonies, not only could immediate independence lead to economic suicide, but "to stage armed revolutions would be actual suicide."²⁴ For this very reason, political protest and activism on Guam operated within strict confines.

Moreover, although political demonstrations on Turtle Island (e.g. the Civil Rights Movement) were morally grounded and non-violent in nature, they often erupted into violence. Such an occurrence on Guam seemed unimaginable on the isle of Guam, especially given the established relationship between the Chamorro people and the U.S. military. Albeit highly extractive and degrading, it was incomparable to the Black experience in the United States. Therefore, engaging in similar tactics or clashing with the authorities were not ideal forms of Chamorro conduct.

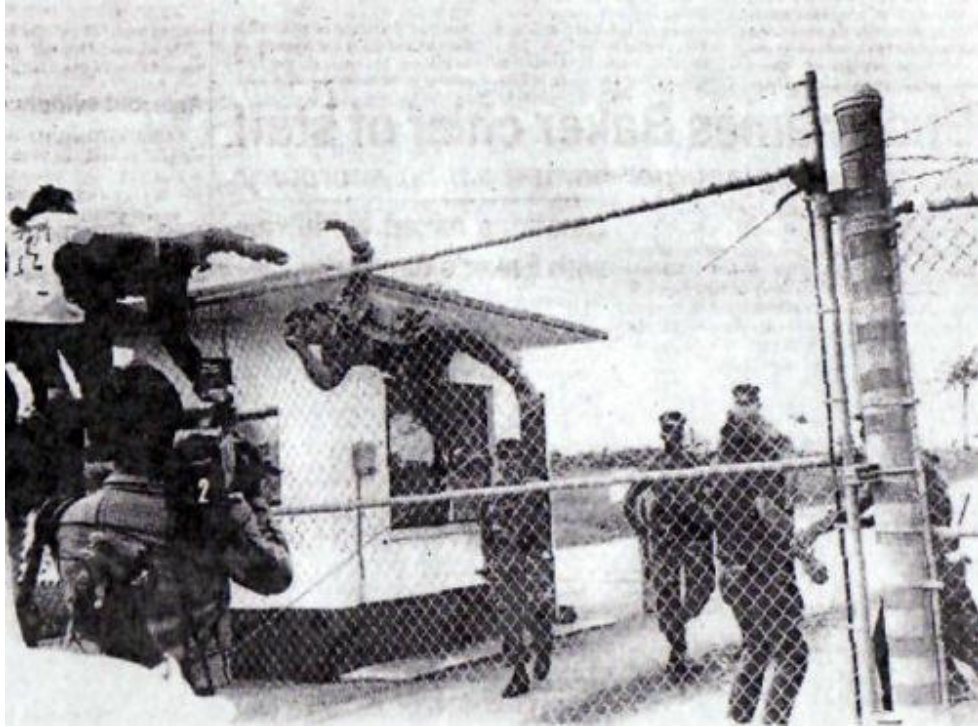
So, when Nasion Chamoru exercised civil disobedience, the larger Chamorro community was not happy to say the least. In a cultural context, this behavior directly confirmed American assumptions of Chamorros and other Indigenous peoples they aimed to change, correct, and therefore colonize. In the most brutal of ways, the colonial education systems enacted in these communities had one goal in mind: "Kill the Indian, save the man."²⁵ On Guam, this involved prioritization of the English language as well as

²⁴ As referenced in Immerwahr, 343.

²⁵ For more on attempted colonial erasure, see: Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2012) and Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man* (San Francisco: City Lights Booksellers & Publishers, 2004).

naval regulation of local lifestyles and behaviors. At the expense of Chamorro language and culture, aspirations of becoming American began to take root on island. Having fought for decades to show themselves capable of being “civilized” in the eyes of Naval officers and bureaucratic officials, Chamorros did so to also prove themselves worthy of self-governance. Therefore, such behavior was not only unbecoming but firmly *taimamahlaho*, meaning to be without shame as well as impolite. Hitting a soft spot deeply entrenched in this history of forced passivity, direct, disrespectful action was quite taboo.

The biggest scandal on the topic of proper conduct and shame revolved around a 1993 demonstration against low-lying training flights over Tiyan. This cause of concern was not unfounded, as the air force had a previous history of crashing planes into public infrastructure like school buildings after flying too low in the prewar era of Guam. In protest, Nasion Chamoru members Angel Santos, Ed Benavente, and others climbed the flight facility’s fence and were swiftly arrested. What occurred after incited controversy: in the process of being apprehended, Santos and another protestor spat on the servicemen who were handling them. Whether or not it was justified, the disrespect displayed that day would live in infamy for the general public but would surely not be forgotten. After that, Nasion Chamoru would certainly not be forgotten.



1.8 “Angel Santos and members of Nasion Chamoru jumping a fence in protest at former Naval Air Station Guam currently known as Tiyan,” sumahi.tumblr.com, 1993.

For Angel Santos and other Nasion Chamoru members, the pretense of politeness was not only unnecessary but enabled the U.S. to continually evade responsibility for its detrimental impact on Chamorro livelihoods. The biggest case in point: the return to civilian life after going to war and getting PTSD for Chamorro servicemen and women. Due to several members identifying as military veterans, their personal experiences of disenchantment with the state, the military, and the overall system largely informed Nasion Chamoru’s general lack of respect for authority. In the case for Vietnam veterans, they not only faced the gruesome vicissitudes of war but endured racism from American soldiers and began to see and feel the precarious position Guam was forced into as an unincorporated territory of the United States.

In the case of Santos himself, he had served in the Air Force and lived on Andersen Air Force Base with his family. His point of no return was when his daughter, Francine, became deathly sick and passed away. Lost before her time, Santos happened upon formerly confidential documents which may have explained Francine's death: US military facilities had been found to contain high levels of toxic chemicals in their drinking water, but they had chosen not to inform residents of these hazardous living conditions. Livid at such an unnecessary and profoundly personal loss, Santos guided the organization along lines of discontent concerning the U.S. military. In finding other traumatized Chamorro vets to vent and share frustrations with, the presence of military veterans in the folds of Nasion Chamoru provided another counterpoint to naysayers. No one could complain these men had not served nor sacrificed for America; in fact, they had sacrificed so much a couple members even symbolically disassociated from the country by renouncing their U.S. citizenship.

More often than not, Nasion Chamoru would be called "crazy" or "too radical." In their grassroots efforts, the organization held meetings in every village on the island, in which some sessions would only be attended by hecklers. And yet, over time, their network would number a couple thousand members and supporters in addition to a public and political acknowledgment of the group itself. Through discussing and relying on their very personal narratives, no one could deny the hurt and pain felt by its organizers, attendees, and observers. For Santos, amongst many other objectives, he wanted to make Guam a safer place for Chamorros to lead healthy lives in their own homeland, on their own terms. Environmental stewardship was especially important to him, as the untimely

death of Francine encapsulated the shockingly low disinterest America reserved for the people of Guam in comparison to their island's strategic military importance and its untapped, pristine natural resources. Rallying around American indifference towards the health of Chamorros, Santos made this statement during the protests of 1992:

“The US has plans to set aside 32,000 acres of that [land] to establish a Guam National Wildlife Refuge to protect our endangered species. In fact, the animals in Guam are more important to the United States gov't than the Chamorro people. In fact, if we do nothing, then the Chamorro people will become the endangered species. How can our people survive when the US military dumped highly toxic chemicals in the northern part of Guam, directly over Guam's sole source water aquifer, underground water aquifer. Based on the water sampling that was done over an eight-year period of time, based on documents that we have, that was given to us, our drinking water has been contaminated with trichloroethylene. How can our people survive when 70% of our drinking water comes from that sole source water aquifer? How can our people survive when our only fresh water lake has a fence built around it, and is a military installation?²⁶

By evoking this idea of Chamorros as an endangered species, Santos urged his audience to recognize they should not be held to the same standard of animals in the eyes of the state. Moreover, inaction was slowly killing them because the U.S. government and military had no problem poisoning Guam's natural resources, and in turn, slowly killing the Chamorro people. If Chamorros wanted to forego such a sad reality, they must break free from being the reluctant pet project of U.S. empire. If they continued to allow the U.S. to dictate their political status, the future would remain bleak as it had been in the past due to a lack of Chamorro disruption. In turn, Nasion Chamoru brought into question the strict dichotomy between *gaimamahlaho* (good) and *taimamahlaho* (bad). Internalizing years of colonial education and clinging to their desire for American acceptance, the application of *gaimamahlaho* in this case extended beyond its core values

²⁶ Johnathan Earl Duenas, “Angel LG Santos- Fonohge Chamoru.” *Youtube* video, 8:47, July 29th, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPrW3XLAEkA>.

of respecting others, knowing your place, and not bringing shame to yourself or your family. Rendering any opposition to the U.S. nation-state as *taimamahlaho*, which may bring up feelings of discomfort and unrest across the board, truly meant only one thing to Nasion Chamoru, its active members, and its devout followers: Chamorros had become more invested in the U.S. perception of Chamorros rather than the well-being of Guam and its people. Through its lack of conformability, Nasion Chamoru allowed the Chamorro people to see that if they wanted genuine change to occur, then they must muster up the courage to challenge authority. They must exert self-respect and see worth in their peoplehood, if not nationhood. Crazy enough to capture the people's attention, Nasion Chamoru was one way for the Chamorros to take a real look in the mirror and reflect on their disjointed and unreciprocated arrangement with the United States.

As aforementioned, land was a point of contention because military land incursions and American assimilation detached Chamorros from their traditional, reciprocal relationship to the land. To ameliorate this generational wound, Nasion Chamoru advocated for physical reliance and spiritual return to the land and ancestral knowledge. In turn, giving land back to the Chamorro people was the highest-ranking objective on the organization's priority list. Land displacement came at a great cost for all on personal, familial, and communal levels. In his research on Chamorro identity formation in relation to concepts of Americanization and Indigeneity, Chamorro scholar Michael P. Perez showcased differing experiences and worldviews held by Chamorros when it came to land ownership. Through his interviews with Chamorros, Perez discovered, "Political awareness of land was also reflected in insights on intra-ethnic and

familial conflict in the context of individualism and profit-maximization; which is perhaps a consequence of the penetration of the capitalist ideologies on Guam.”²⁷

Whether bereft of land which would have been in their family’s possession, had their relatives not sold it at excruciatingly low prices, or lucky enough to have retained a portion of their family’s ancestral land, every Chamorro has a story in relation to the value and contest of land. Many participants of Perez’s spoke of its invaluable quality to not only them, but of their kids and future generations of Chamorros. In his interview with a Chamorro man named John, pensive frustration seeped from his plethora of points regarding Guam’s longstanding land situation:

“Land is a very divisive issue... How you deal with land?... You have to compete with your relatives to try and get your own piece... But then you’re talking about lands that are held by the government. I mean one-third of our islands is owned by the Feds. The other third is owned by the local government. It’s just too much... You know we’re right here in the middle of the Pacific and land is not growing on trees. The population is growing... There’s been a great injustice. The federal government took advantage of the fact that the people in Guam definitely had gratitude for their efforts during World War II... to rid the island of the oppression that the Japanese you know... But a new kind of oppression formed with all these land takings. It’s the ... best properties on the island, and they [military] took it for themselves.”²⁸

This type of sentiment struck a chord with Nasion Chamoru for a multitude of reasons. Summing up the importance of land to his people, Chamorro lawyer Michael F. Phillips argues, “Land is the soul of our culture; it, together with the sea, gives life to the Chamorro... [It] is literally the base of our culture. It incorporates special relationships: of clan, family, religion, and beliefs. While land is such a large part of our culture, the

²⁷ Perez, Chris P. “Colonialism, Americanization, and Indigenous Identity: A Research Note on Chamorro Identity in Guam,” *Sociological Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (Oxfordshire: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 580.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 581.

land available on our little island is even smaller than it would appear. Less than one-third of the island is owned by Chamorros.”²⁹

With this in mind, Nasion Chamoru scrapped to achieve notable change regarding Chamorro access to their own homeland(s). As the organization took legal action, went on hunger strikes and protests, and even camped out twice on GovGuam’s lawn at Adelup (each lasting over a month!), their labor amounted to the formation and implementation of the Chamorro Land Trust. Even though GovGuam had been working on returning excess military-occupied lands back to its original Chamorro owners, the wheels of bureaucracy tend to turn slower than an Amish grandmother churning fresh butter. The most influential strategy of Nasion Chamoru was its ceaseless motive towards direct action. Inspired by its fearless leader, Angel Santos, personal anger and frustration at the American system of governance influenced their conceptualization of confrontation. If they did not take action now, then what would happen down the line? Akin to the controversy stirred by OPI-R’s Chamorro-only vote of self-determination, the topic of immigration was something Nasion Chamoru also envisioned should be under local, Indigenous control so as best to support the island’s own Native inhabitants. Keeping it blunt and brief, Angel Santos offered two distinct statements regarding immigration:

“American Indians are now one-third of one percent of the United States because of US immigration laws. What will happen to Chamorros?”

“We’re not racist. We’re nationalists and there is a big difference. We are not anti-Filipino or anti-Korean or anti-American. We’re pro-Chamorus, and there is a big difference.”

²⁹ Phillips, 3-14.

For Chamorros of the late 20th century, comparing their historical struggles and current lot in life to that of Native American nations made sense. Both fell under the Department of the Interior, experienced continued American colonialism, and managed to survive assimilationist projects; the only difference was that Chamorros still maintained populational and political power for the time being. In observing the various states of success and struggle of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, it was like seeing alternate endings to the same general plotline. Except this time around, they had the power and agency to decide where their future was headed.



1.9 “In the 1992 file photo, Angel Santos of the Chamoru Nation Traditional Council presents a statement of warning to sentry guard Scott Stormer at Naval Air Station in Barrigada. Santos, an activist, went on to become a senator.”³⁰

³⁰ Chloe Babauta, “Activism can be a rough way to enter the political world,” *Pacific Daily News*, October 30th, 2018.

Trans-Indigenous Recognitions: Chamorro Moves Towards Sovereignty & Solidarity

As organizations both deeply entrenched in personal connections and working towards a Guam which benefitted the Chamorro people, both OPI-R and Nasion shared an interest in the power of enacting relationships with other Indigenous peoples and communities. In the mini-documentary *Let Freedom Ring: The Chamorro Search for Sovereignty*, OPI-R member Hope Cristobal and Nasion Chamoru member Joe Garrido are featured prominently in interview segments alongside other Chamorro individuals concerned with Guam's political development, economic sustenance if the island were to achieve independence from the U.S., and other concerns. With the footage bearing a notable watermark stating "Permission to use by the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians" in all eight clips on Guampedia's Vimeo account, the formal encounter between Chamorros of Guam and the Cabazons, a federally recognized Native American tribe of Cahuilla Indians whose reservation lands are located in present day Riverside County, CA, is forever encapsulated on video. Capturing testimonies from both Indigenous groups, the minidoc features segments on Indigenous rights counseling and clips of interpersonal relations between Chamorros, legal experts, as well as spokespeople for the Cabazon's economic model. Moving beyond Chamorro-American relations, this intentional meeting was indicative of a mutual desire to share and learn from each other in terms of achieving and embodying Indigenous sovereignty. It also highlighted the confluence of larger processes, such as globalization and decolonization, which enabled acts of Indigenous recognition to take place.

Although an ocean apart, their similar experiences of colonialism, land dispossession, and living under the U.S. nation-state erected mutual understandings and aspirations to create culturally sound, Indigenous-led solutions, however capitalist and Western-oriented they may be. In his role as CEO of the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Mark Nichols was clear in intent in terms of his nation's visit to the island of Guam: "As advocates for Indigenous people's rights, the Cabazons want to pass along their knowledge and success in achieving economic independence through their sovereign right to self-determination."³¹ This emphasis on developing an economic model does operate within a capitalist framework, which runs counter to Indigenous Chamorro epistemologies concerning reciprocity and generosity, but ultimately it was one extension of American dominance on island urgently in need to be address at the time. As an import-heavy island, developing alternative forms of economic exchange became essential to conceptualizing the future. However, the suggestions made by Nichols which may work in the continental U.S. seem improbable now on a 212 square foot island like Guam, "...where perhaps part of the island will end up being a reservation with ultimately the indigenous people being able to start to control the influx of immigration so that it can be in fact within their own hands."³² This is especially problematic given how compassionate and receptive the Chamorro people are; as John James, Tribal Chairman of the Cabazons, noted how hospitable his tribe was received and the intensity of tearful goodbyes despite having only known each other for a couple days. In the words of Patricia Garrido, the president of the Ancestral Landowners Coalition of Guam, "I welcome you as a human being, but I must ask you to also respect my Indigenous rights

³¹ Guampedia, "Let Freedom Ring, Part 1" (1:13-1:25), 2013, <https://vimeo.com/72230972>.

³² Guampedia, "Let Freedom Ring, Part 5" (2:48-3:02), 2013, <https://vimeo.com/72230978>.

as a Native inhabitant of my homeland. And we can coexist that way, but you must show the respect not only for my people, but our lands and our resources and our customs and our language.”³³ Across the board, the Chamorro leaders featured in this film advocated strongly on behalf of their people through their anecdotal arguments and historical re-narration of events. Perhaps the most stirring commentary of the documentary for my ends and means, a teary-eyed Joe Garrido speculates, “...and we feel that it’s time to form the Chamoru nation to educate the islands that Chamorros must take grip with what’s left of our future and start a revival so we could survive; if our ancestors can survive for almost 5000 years, why are we heading in a direction that, in less than 100 years, we will simply cease to exist?”³⁴

As Western conceptions of time and space have been problematized throughout this work, it is especially intriguing how Garrido points out the extent of damage (both physical and psychological) inflicted on both the island and its people in the relatively short tenure of American imperialism. Akin to the sentiment of “there are decades in which nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen,”³⁵ the construct of time as we know cannot aptly encapsulate everything and nothing which can and has occurred on Guam in relation to political development, or lack thereof. Given Guam’s long, arduous history of battling foreign intervention and subsequent colonization on island, it is true more rapid change occurred in the 100 years of American occupation compared to the 300+ years of Spanish conquest and settlement. Also, Garrido’s implied

³³ Guampedia, “Let Freedom Ring, Part 3” (1:28-1:54), 2013, <https://vimeo.com/72230976>.

³⁴ Guampedia, “Let Freedom Ring, Part 3” (2:42-3:25), 2013, <https://vimeo.com/72230976>.

³⁵ “Days Into Which 20 Years are Compressed,” *Quote Investigator*, July 13th, 2020, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2020/07/13/decades-weeks/>.

sense of exigency proves particularly vital in understanding how specific moments in time can act as major turning points. Spurring swift successions of political decision-making and community organizing, these instances make historians contemplate the larger historical trends that precipitated such action. In this thesis, 1898 and the last two decades of the 20th century operate as those big picture moments in which anything could happen given the varying circumstances of Chamorro agency and even activism displayed.

The figure of Angel Santos also figured prominently into conversations of Indigenous solidarity, both in public speeches and personal life. In a speech given on Oahu, Hawai'i about American injustice towards Chamorros on Guam, he also drew lines of connection between various groups of people in fighting the beast of imperialism. To illustrate how Guam's unique experience is interconnected to other oppressed peoples, Santos frames Chamorro history as one example of Indigenous peoples struggling to protect themselves and their lands against colonial countries. Utilizing the phraseology of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Santos admits he had a dream to share what was happening on Guam with the rest of the world, to expose American imperialism on island, because "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere."³⁶ Furthermore, Santos continually lays out this interconnected struggle against colonialism via references to geographic regions or nations experiencing a similar situation. Rather boldly, he declares: "Colonialism on Guam and throughout the world has its roots in capitalism and the exploitation of land and natural resources, our mother earth. In the name of

³⁶ Duenas, Johnathan Earl. "Angel LG Santos- Fonohge Chamoru." *Youtube* video, 8:47, July 29th, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPrW3XLAekA>.

capitalism, colonial countries are taking over peoples' land, they are controlling our people back in Guam. Colonialism is alive today; it is very much alive in Gaza strip and the west bank. You will find its heart beating in Northern Ireland. You will find the blood of colonialism flowing down in South Africa. Young people throughout the world are making changes in Japan, the Philippines, Korea, South Africa, China, Guam, and here in Hawai'i. We need to stand together, so today I bring with me a message of unity, a message of coalition of all Indigenous peoples."³⁷

Moving beyond alliances with Native American and Pacific island nations, which naturally Santos must find communion with and commitment to, he implores larger national entities to join a global coalition against the scourge of Western colonialism. This is quite noticeable through his evocation of Japan and China, despite both countries possessing colonial histories within Asia and the Pacific. Regardless, a sizeable bargaining power could be brokered by opting for larger entities to advocate on behalf of potential small island nations like that of a re-unified Marianas. In a constantly globalizing world, Angel Santos, and by virtue Nasion Chamoru, envisioned Chamorro sovereignty which also worked alongside other Indigenous struggles around the globe.

Attesting to the everlasting value of Indigenous solidarity, the echoes of Angel Santos and Nasion Chamoru's activism still reverberated years later and found resonance amongst other Pacific Islander activists. In the case of Hawaiian sovereignty activist and human rights attorney Mililani Trask, her own research on the Native Hawaiian

³⁷ Ibid.

community led to a posthumous discovery of Santos' life story and activist work. In researching the frequent occurrence of cancer clusters and cases of infants born with leukemia in Hawaiian homelands near military bases, she and other Hawaiian activists found out about the tragic story of Francine Santos. At the intersection of Pacific Islander health and militarism, thorough lines of connection were easily drawn between both Indigenous communities. Sharing her thoughts about Santos' key role in greater Pacific activism and advocacy, Trask said:

“the reason why Angel Santos has kind of become a leader for all of us even though he may have passed is because when you learned of his struggle, when you see what videos there are, you can't help but be impacted by his commitment... I was very informed by Angel Santos' struggle and what happened to him; you know, he was such a hero for all of us. We could not lose his memory... By bringing back videos, his writing, his speeches, our children, who are yet to be born, are now being inspired by the words of angel. His memory lives on, his teaching survive.”³⁸

At the end of the 20th century, Guam had undergone a multitude of important events which paved the way towards modern development and endless quests attempting to answer the question of political status. After World War II, massive military incursions and subsequent land seizures built the foundation for underlying Chamorro resentment towards their supposed saviors. Over time, July 21st had equal potential to be regarded as “Liberation Day” or “Reoccupation Day” due to a reassessment of continued occupation on familial lands and sacred sites. In the passing of Guam's Organic Act, the federal government offered Chamorros a liminal form of American citizenship and reaffirmed its primary purpose for maintaining Guam in the expanses of its empire. As the tip of the

³⁸ Kuam News, “Hawaiian activist praises Angel Santos as hero for all Pacific peoples,” *Youtube* video, 3:09, September 18th, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pknxsgMvaU&list=PLIVMGzIjHoktJY4MDFeUbacSX34oVW7BC&index=2>.

spear, it would become vital to the U.S. military in the Asia-Pacific region; American presence on island had no deep-seated interest in supporting the Chamorro people in attaining sovereignty due to their island's strategic importance.

As a result, Chamorro politicians and activists had to exercise more agency in the hopes of gaining any form of tangible change. Through the momentous Guam Congress Walkout of 1949, which was expertly conducted by Guam legislators and circulated by national press, mid-century change came into fruition through passage of the aforementioned Organic Act. As one of the earliest organizations to grace Guam in the 1970's, Para'Pada Y Chamorus set the tone for Chamorro activism to revolve around historical evidence and to fight for a future of Guam they wanted and believed would best benefit future generations of Chamorros. Additionally, PARA-PADA successfully mastered tactics of grassroots activism like the art of making flyers, marching for a cause, and petitioning the people. Through their push for Chamorro language immersion in the Pacific Daily News and the educational system, language revitalization and wider cultural resurgence would take precedence in later conversations of Chamorro nationalism. In terms of their distinct disapproval of moving forward with a Guam Constitution, conquering such a hollow document left more room for late Chamorro activist groups to dream up their own visions of Chamorro futurity in an everchanging Guam.

Following their forebearers, OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru heavily relied on historical frameworks to root and route their chosen causes. They also placed a weighty premium on personal narratives and the indispensable value of creating reciprocal relationships with other Indigenous communities. Demarcating along socioeconomic lines, OPI-R represented a more well-educated elite and Nasion Chamoru stood up for the

lower- and working-class faction of Chamorro society; both groups opted for a variety of grassroots tactics to spread their message.

With their emphasis on scholarship, OPI-R took special care in crafting their speeches and recognizing the lack of civil rights afforded to Chamorros at their organized protests, Congressional hearings, and the C-24 at the United Nations. Inheriting several of PARA-PADA's key members, OPI-R worked to inform and spread information concerning Guam's political status through education. Their primary objective was to establish the Chamorro right to self-determination. As for Nasion Chamoru, they were resolute in their idealistic aims of independence. They made great strides in land policy, as their direct-action tactics forced the hand of Guam politicians to not only organize but implement the Chamorro Land Trust Act. Speaking on behalf of the disillusioned, including traumatized military veterans, Nasion Chamoru's less polite and abrasive conduct stirred more controversy. No matter what, both groups made unequivocal demands of Chamorro precedence in political matters. With an emphasis on Chamorros, exclusion of other ethnic groups in a multicultural island landscape resulted in counterarguments of racism. To this point, Chamorro activists met these claims with historical retorts of extended political disenfranchisement since 1898 (OPI-R) as well as the dawn of Western civilization (Nasion Chamoru). Routine returns to the past constituted the number one justification for practically all political acts of protest or demonstration. If the U.S. nation-state had consistently wronged the Chamorro people in the past over several decades, it always had the power and potential to rectify the situation on moral and legal grounds.

Beyond the tireless, often fruitless work of seeking state recognition, Chamorro activists also expressed devout interest in establishing relationships with other Indigenous peoples and offering solidarity in a reciprocal manner. In the mini-documentary *Let Freedom Ring!*, Chamorro activist organizations like OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru discussed Guam's economic standing and political status with visiting members of the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians. As the founder of Nasion Chamoru and most well-known Chamorro activist, Angel Santos drew lines of connection between the plight of Chamorros and other Indigenous peoples around the world. Whilst undertaking unique trajectories resulting in various states of success and struggle, they all inherited histories of unfathomable impact due to colonialism as well as the passed down teachings of their ancestors. Remarkable in its own right, fixing the wrongs of attempted genocide could only be met with reparations. As OPI-R put it in one of their statements to the UN, "We present this historical perspective not to inspire you with the story of the survival of a small, but proud group of people This story is repeated in many parts of the world and is not unique in its plot nor its cast of characters. Rather, we present it to you so that you may understand how the forces of colonialism may work on the psychology of an entire people." In this way, Chamorro activism was just as much oriented towards swaying political leaders in support of Chamorro self-determination, if not sovereignty, as well as the Indigenous people of the island.

Epilogue:
Activist Efforts Today and the Act of Making Art:
Chamorro Activism of the 21st Century and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Day in and day out, my archival research at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa followed a set routine of search, retrieve, analyze, and save. As the preliminary place of my summer research, I spent June 2019 on Oahu conducting oral history interviews and archival research. My main archive was at the Hamilton Library at UH Manoa. Upon entering Hamilton, I would go directly to the fifth floor and put everything besides my laptop, writing materials, and headphones inside the hallway locker. In the sometimes awkward, sometimes comforting silence of the Pacific Collection's reading room, I would momentarily chat with Stu Dawrs and other librarians before commencing my work. For hours on end, I would search, retrieve, analyze, and save my collected materials and call it a day around 4 pm. On the dot, I would also take a lunch break at 12-noon to eat and defrost from the library's air conditioning. Sitting beneath the trees, I counted my lucky stars for the chance to conduct my first dive into the archives here and now.

One day, I met with Craig Santos Perez in the Pacific Collection reading room. Although our first meeting was an informal, preliminary chat, I was fangirling internally, nonetheless. In addition to being an English professor at UH Manoa, he is also an activist, poet, and Chamorro raised and living in diaspora. Despite being such a prolific figure in our community, academic circles, and the realm of poetry, Craig was the opposite of intimidating. In the best way, he brought this incredible calm to the conversation through his own humility and openness to share his life story. Moreover, he expressed interest in

mine and urged me to take up poetry (still working on that last part). It was one of my favorite days in the archive. At our second meeting in his office, he spoke on activism's role in raising community consciousness in the present. In relating Chamorro frustrations regarding the 2006 military build-up to Kanaka Maoli indignation concerning the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, he noted,

“There are a lot...who never thought about colonialism... [and] now they actually believe the mountain is sacred and they're willing to fight for it. And so, it politicized a lot of people. Same with the military build-up, it politicized me 13 years ago when it was first developed and it's politicized a whole generation of Chamorros who are like, 'this is wrong.' There are a lot of veterans who are like, 'this is not right.' So every time something bad like this happens, every time they exploit us and take advantage and steal from us or take from us or destroy land ... what grows from that, is our movement gets stronger; there's more of us... so that we're stronger for the next fight and the next fight, and hopefully, eventually our movements will be big and strong enough to overthrow the entire system. All these crimes they've committed themselves over decades and centuries, every time that happens there's a new generation of people who become activated.”¹

In layering various points of personal, communal, and generational politicization, Perez addresses the plentiful, but untapped power of the people. As mass movements cannot occur without the masses, they also require political actors and playmakers who can set off a domino effect. As individuals focused primarily on community well-being and local affairs, they may or may not claim such responsibility or take up formal office. In this thesis, I follow figures like Francisco Portusach and Padre Palomo as well as Hope Cristobal and Angel Santos in their respective eras of political organizing. Varying in their commitment to the United States, everyone was staunchly involved with and invested in the Chamorro community on Guam. Addressing issues of the times, the details differed but the inherent desire of possessing self-governance and political rights remained the same across the board. Embodied by their ceaseless efforts and an ever-

¹ Craig Santos Perez, interview by author, Oahu, June 28th, 2019.

consistent thread of seeking sovereignty throughout the 20th century, Chamorro activism is a history best told with an eye towards the future. Given history happens every day, the cyclical nature of ecological time also reinforces this propensity. As our past informs the present and the present anticipates the future, they are all just points in a circle.

The Journey Towards Political Autonomy: Present Developments and Future Steps

Often an end is just the beginning; because of this truth, this concluding chapter will focus on recent events in relation to the realm Chamorro activism on Guam. Within the past five years alone, so much has taken place. To summarize contemporary moves towards sovereignty and organized resistance on island, I start at the tipping point: 2006. Formally known as the Roadmap for Realignment Implementation, this bilateral agreement between the United States and Japan involved the transfer of several thousand servicemen from U.S. military bases in Okinawa to Guam. This initial projection, which would become heightened in scope, constituted the largest military build-up on island since World War II. In 2009, the Department of Defense (DOD) released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which outlined potential plans and perceived impacts because of the military build-up. Beyond simply relocating people, the military build-up also required more land for military families as well as “live round weapons training.”² Beyond mere influence, such monumental change carried the risk of negatively altering the environment, life on Guam, and local demographics for years to come. Rooted in a pre-existing history of continual military occupation and expansion on island, Catherine Lutz says Guam’s colonial history was, “...no less true in 2009 than it

² Cara Flores Mays and Leevin Camacho, “We Are Guahan,” last modified September 17th, 2020, <https://www.guampedia.com/we-are-guahan/>.

was in 1950 or 1977... social science will call it nothing more than colonial when a people have not historically chosen their most powerful leaders... Social science has another concept relevant to Guam's situation, and that is militarization."³

We Are Guåhan

In sharing this sentiment, Chamorros concerned about the military build-up coalesced into activist groups. One such organization was We are Guåhan (WAG), whose key moments will be recorded for posterity here. To unearth the U.S. military's underlying intentions, WAG's first task was to educate the public about the contents and implications of the DEIS. To attract attention and mobilize concerned community members, WAG summarized information in the DEIS which had been derived from public hearings held by DOD. After reading the DEIS, which was 10,000 pages in length, they took notice of potential problems. In highlighting the plan's negative components, WAG composed selective fact sheets as a guide to the DEIS for the people of Guam. Known as the "Grey Papers," these slanted, but nonetheless factual sheets exposed a lack of mitigation measures and also referenced, "the destruction of more than seventy acres of coral reef and the construction of a firing range complex on and around Pãgat Village, an ancient indigenous village and burial site."⁴ Bringing to light this environmental destruction and cultural disrespect of sacred spaces, the group generated widespread outrage on island by all types of people, not just Chamorros. To capitalize on this momentum, WAG organized a DEIS comment drive which exceeded well over 10,000

³ Catherine Lutz, "US Military Bases on Guam in Theoretical and Global Context," presidential lecture at the University of Guam, April 14th, 2009.

⁴ Cara Flores Mays and Leevin Camacho, "We Are Guahan."

public comments. Due to their remarkable research and role in activating the public, We are Guåhan became the well-known for its mobilization against the military build-up from the mid-2000's onward.

Through their emphasis on uplifting Chamorro history and culture, WAG also made it a priority to conduct community-centered endeavors. Through their series of "Heritage Hikes," the group would host hiking tours around various plots of land already taken by the military or being considered for military purposes. From coral reefs in Apra Harbor to the Northern Lens Aquifer, extremely important areas of Guam's environment were under potential threat. In this form of place-based learning, We are Guåhan exposed their hikers to the beauty and fragility of locales around Guam. Rather than limit these tours to just Chamorros, any interested was welcomed to join in. From island locals to tourists and news reporters, the point of the Heritage Hikes was to garner widespread support against the military's proposed build-up. Despite already controlling nearly a third of the island's acreage, the DOD still sought a new location for a proposed firing range. As the most recently contentious landmark in modern history, both the U.S. military and Chamorro-led activist groups fought to either possess or protect Pãgat.

Pop Up Political Activism: Save Pãgat Movement

As the largest community-centered protests on island since the 1990's, the political protests to save Pãgat both resembled and diverged from Chamorro activism of the late 20th century. According to the National trust for Historic Preservation, Pãgat was included on their 2010 list of the eleven most endangered historic places.⁵ With a rich

⁵ "Pãgat," *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, published in 2011, accessed April 15th, 2021, <https://savingplaces.org/places/pagat#.YHufE-hKh3g>.

history dating back to 700 A.D., Pãgat was once an ancient Chamorro village whose origins were confirmed by remains of latte stone (pre-colonial structural stone foundations), freshwater caves, and other material culture (stone mortars, pottery, tools). Especially revered due to its rarity and preservation, this ancient Chamorro settlement serves as a sacred site. When something is sacred, you don't mess with it. For the Chamorro people, the threat against Pãgat cut deep to the core of their Indigenous identity. At the surface level, this desire to assault native lands for the sake of target practice risked the health of the larger environment. On top of this, the U.S. military's persistency in preference for Pãgat constituted an attack on their history and culture. For the contemporary Chamorro community of the 2000's, "The Suruhanos and Suruhanas or local healers seek advice from the spirits and herbs of our ancestors, the fishermen still come to make their catch, and the young and old still seek the refuge of the historic Pãgat village to reflect and to be inspired to preserve our culture and our heritage."⁶ In maintaining love and reverence for this significant cultural site, Chamorros fought tooth and nail to protect Pãgat.

In the case of long-time Chamorro activist Hope Cristobal, "Pãgat, to me, is like the canary in the coal mine. If it gets destroyed, then it means the destruction of our whole island."⁷ The movement to save Pãgat was extremely important because it would also set a precedence for future land battles between Chamorros and the U.S. military. Set

⁶ Guam Preservation Trust, "Preserve and Protect Pãgat," *GoPetition*. May 4th, 2010. <https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/preserve-and-protect-p%C3%A5gat.html>.

⁷ Hope Cristobal, "Save Pagat Village!" *Vimeo*, 2011. <https://vimeo.com/13989552>.

within the confines of the Obama era, engaging with political leaders proved just as difficult in the 21st century as it had been throughout the course of American history.

In March of 2010, a moment of opportunity arose for Chamorro activists due to a scheduled visit on Guam by President Barack Obama. As part of his Asia tour, he would make an appearance at Andersen Air Force Base along the way. In preparation for this pitstop, We Are Guåhan once again mobilized their troops to make a statement and hopefully be heard. Requesting Obama to step beyond the confines of the base and engage with the local community, the group organized a petition which gained well over 11,000 signatures of support. Given their primary point of interest revolved around the military build-up, his administration knew engaging with the community on their own turf would ultimately lead to more controversy. To appease WAG, the White set aside 80 bus passes for members to attend a rally on base. In response, activists defied this meager offer by organizing a “We Are Here” protest. Along the lines of an anti-prom, the protest was planned to be on the other side of the fence. Both literally and figuratively, this plan was an act of provocation for Obama to step outside the controlled setting on Andersen. Ultimately, this debacle was left unresolved. Instead of going through with this stopover on Guam, Obama’s trip was cancelled mere days before his planned arrival. Similar to others instances brought up earlier in this thesis, one cannot help but wonder what would have happened had he shown up. After this scenario was left unrealized, We are Guåhan cut this loss and kept it pushing. In 2013, the prayers and hard work of all those hoping to protect Pãgat were substantiated. Reached a pinnacle of protection, Pãgat was “no longer

the Navy's top choice for future military firing ranges on the island.”⁸ Thanks to the efforts of We are Guåhan and many other organizations and concerned community members, saving Pãgat was only the first skirmish between these established rivals.

Prutehi Litekyan/Save Ritidian

In saving Pãgat, the work of Chamorro activists and community organizers was just beginning. As former Governor Eddie Calvo put it, “First, we saved Pagat as promised we would work toward. Second, the military is moving forward in the spirit of its four pillars, one of which was to reduce its footprint in the spirit of its four pillars, one of which was to reduce its footprint and the other to leave Pagat village and caves untouched.”⁹ In conceding Pãgat, Governor Calvo noted the U.S. military would charge full steam ahead with their fire range plans elsewhere on island. Like a game of whack-a-mole, saving Pãgat simply meant another location would be considered for this plan. After years of research and deliberation, the military set their sights on Litekyan. Also known as Ritidian, this area was already military property but shared immense cultural and environmental qualities to that of Pãgat. As another sacred site, Litekyan's historical and cultural importance was steeped in an entirely unique circumstance. In my café chat with Chamorro business owner Aguarin Iriarte, he raised my attention to this factoid: “There's a tree where the firing range is at, it's a tree only Indigenous to Guam, and it's the only tree left here on the island... This tree was in the middle of the firing range; they weren't going to bulldoze it or anything but... This tree's been around for hundreds and hundreds of years, it kind of has this... it's very spiritual.”¹⁰

⁸ Tritten, Travis. “Guam ancestral land no longer top choice for Marine ranges,” *Star and Stripes*, published September 11th, 2013, accessed April 15th, 2021, <https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/guam-ancestral-land-no-longer-top-choice-for-marine-ranges-1.240693>.

⁹ Tritten.

¹⁰ Aguarin Iriarte, interview by author, Agana. July 21st, 2019.

Given the *Serianthes nelsonii*'s importance, this tree became a key reason to divert from Litekyan. To address the grave necessity of firing range meets nearly extinct Indigenous tree, the Chamorro organization Prutehi Litekyan took up the helm on this issue ever since 2017 and continues this much-needed work well into our present moment. As a "direct action group dedicated to the protection of natural and cultural resources in all sites identified for DOD live-fire firing training on Guam," one of Litekyan's primary objectives was to protect the *Serianthes nelsonii*.¹¹ From *change.org* petitions to local protests, this demand was partially met. Out of five firing ranges being built on the Northwest Field at Andersen Air Force Base, one was moved so as not to endanger it. Better than nothing, movements to save Pãgat and Litekyan were able to achieve notable success because of their geographic specificity.

Quite recently, Prutehi Litekyan's highly active and consistent stance since 2017 has paid off tenfold due to a major symbolic victory in 2021. In 2020, Prutehi Litekyan carried on OPI-R's legacy of lobbying at the international level. Represented by Blue Ocean Law and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), Prutehi Litekyan's legal counsel filed a joint submission to a single person, Francisco Calí Tzay, for consideration. In his role as special rapporteur (equivalent to reporter for those of us who wonder why French complicates things), Tzay's appointment by the Human Rights Council by the United Nations allows him to conduct formal investigations independent

¹¹ Save Ritidian. "Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian and Oppose Degradation and Militarization of Native Lands," *change.org*, petition, published date unknown, accessed April 15th, 2021, <https://www.change.org/p/prutehi-litekyan-save-ritidian-and-oppose-the-degradation-and-militarization-of-native-lands>.

of governmental influence. With a concentration in human rights violations, Tzay's final verdict could lend credence to Chamorro activists' pleas for international protections against the U.S. military build-up. Rather than submit sole testimony in the UN's Committee on Decolonization (C-24), Prutehi Litekyan aims to seek recognition from an independent, investigative reporter rather than appeal to United Nations committees.

In noticing this latter avenue as a dead end, it was not only wise for Prutehi Litekyan to hire professionals, but to enlist the help of Julian Aguon. As a Chamorro poet, activist, and attorney with Blue Ocean Law, Aguon brings both legal expertise and Indigenous investment to the collective's efforts in finding further fault with the military build-up on Guam. To be clear, "this submission is not a lawsuit. It asks Tzay, who is a high-profile expert on human rights violations, to look at the allegations made in the submission."¹² After seven months of independent investigations, Tzay and two other special rapporteurs issued this statement to President Joe Biden:

"We would like to express our serious concern over the U.S. military buildup in the absence of adequate consultation with the (CHamoru) people and the associated threats to indigenous lands, resources, environmental and cultural rights," the letter stated. "Notably, the (CHamoru) people have not provided their free, prior and informed consent in connection with the ongoing expansion of U.S. military bases and its accompanying increase in personnel on Guam."¹³

For Chamorro activists, this is huge. Not only is it the most significant statement bringing into question U.S. military conduct on Guam, but the letter also asserts there was no 'free, prior and informed' consent for the build-up. Although the Human Rights

¹² Jerick Sablan, "Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian seeks support from United Nations," *Pacific Daily News*, published August 8th, 2020. <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2020/08/07/prutehi-litekyan-save-ritidian-united-nations-guam-military-buildup/3306527001/>.

¹³ Kaur, Anumita. "U.N. Human Rights Council: No 'free, prior and informed' consent for buildup," *Pacific Daily News*, published March 31st, 2021. <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2021/03/31/human-rights-council-no-free-prior-and-informed-consent-buildup/4815457001/>.

Council cannot do anything further, Aguon and others argue its strength is the power to influence future decisions. Despite its pitfalls, he claims, "...it can be what opens the door to really meaningful conversations between CHamoru activists and the Biden administration. It can lead to meetings with the newly appointed Deb Haaland of the Department of the Interior. It can recalibrate the relationship at a policy level. Maybe they can build in a mechanism for better respecting the rights that have already been violated."¹⁴ Because of its potential to aid Chamorros in the fight to protect the island they call home, this symbolic victory truly constitutes a landmark moment in the modern history of Chamorro activism. As the culmination of continual assertions against U.S. mistreatment of Chamorros and their island, this could be a turning point for the better.

The Reality of Being a Modern-Day U.S. Colony: Kim Jong Un & COVID-19

Already deprived of the right to representation, the harsh trust of Guam's second-class citizenship was on full display throughout the atrocious four-year period attributed to the Trump administration. Exacerbating palpable, pre-existing tension between the United States and North Korea, the former president had a way of making a bad situation even worse. With talk of missile tests, sanctions, and threats of deploying said missiles exchanged between the two nations, a crisis was bound to take form given their personalities and positionalities. Oddly enough, it took a Twitter feud between these "world leaders," and suddenly Guam and its people were somehow dragged into the mud. From NYT to BBC, major news publications spoke solely of Guam and its strategic importance. Always an afterthought, the worries and concerns of those on Guam did not

¹⁴ Ibid.

seem to count for much. Besides, realistically there was nothing Chamorros or others on island could do if Kim Jong Un were to follow through with his nuclear plans: it would only take 14 to 15 minutes for a missile launched from Pyongyang to reach Guam anyways.¹⁵ Even when news reports recognized Guam as inhabited, they did not care about the fate of Indigenous Chamorros. In a tweet made by Chamorro Chris “Malafunkshun” Barnett, he wrote, “When national media says Guam is ‘home to 1000s of military and their families’ like the rest of us don’t matter [followed by crying of laughter and perplexed hand on face emojis].”¹⁶ Given Chamorros were accustomed to living in a highly militarized state, their opinions of the situation ran the gamut of intense nervousness to a nonchalant lack of fear. As a kindred spirit of my Grandma Chris, Chris Malafunkshun readily deploys humor as a coping mechanism to get through the situation at hand. Ever the warmonger, Trump’s behavior online certainly did not help matters; thankfully, the threats remained unfulfilled.

With the advent of COVID-19, its transmission to Guam epitomized the lack of care and reciprocity between Chamorros and the U.S. military. Aptly captured in a New York Times subheading, “An outbreak aboard an aircraft carrier has left local officials in Guam to contend with the arrival of hundreds of infected sailors, while they also try to protect the island’s population.”¹⁷ Arriving on March 27th, 2020, the *USS Roosevelt*

¹⁵ “North Korea threats unsettle Guam islanders,” *BBC News*, August 9th, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40871854#:~:text=North%20Korea%20claims%20it%20has.along%20with%20some%20165%2C000%20civilians.>

¹⁶ Chris Barnett, “When national media says Guam is ‘home to 1000s of military and their families’ like the rest of us don’t matter,” *Twitter*, August 8th, 2017, 7:27 pm PST, <https://twitter.com/MALAFUNKSHUN/status/895109305082433536>.

¹⁷ Courtney Mabeus, “How an Island Oasis Became the Navy’s Coronavirus Epicenter,” *New York Times*, updated April 29th, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/magazine/guam-theodore-roosevelt-navy-coronavirus.html>.

docked on Guam knowing fully well it was a super spreader vessel. Over the course of several weeks, the virus spread aboard like wildfire and wound-up infecting over 500 sailors of a crew numbering around 5,000. Unable to contain the outbreak, the ship's commander, Capt. Brett E. Crozier, blamed a lack of proper resources from the Navy. Hoping to gain support, Crozier wrote a rather controversial letter to several naval officials. In essentially wanting off the ship, he wrote, "We are not at war... Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset—our sailors."¹⁸

In a rather self-serving manner, Crozier's focus on the health of his sailors was irrational in comparison to the pre-existing health conditions of Guam's Chamorro people. In Fazio's article, despite the rapidity of covid reaching the sailors, there was only one sailor who passed away from contracting the virus. Whereas on Guam, "About 60% of deaths on Guam are caused by chronic diseases that are linked to poor diet and lifestyle patterns."¹⁹ In terms of poor diet and lifestyle patterns on island, this claim falls into a long history of food importation caused in part by the U.S. military as well as American fast-food culture starting in the 1980's.²⁰ With a genetic predisposition to diabetes and cardiovascular issues, let alone Guam's sizeable elderly population, the disparity was clear. Although it is unfair to generalize this situation from one extreme to

¹⁸ Marie Fazio, "Three sailors test positive aboard U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt, site of spring outbreak, officials say," *New York Times*, February 16th, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/16/world/covid-coronavirus-uss-roosevelt.html?auth=login-email&login=email>.

¹⁹ *The Ten (10) Leading Causes of Death*. Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services: Office of Vital Statistics, 2003.

²⁰ For more insight, read: Craig Santos Perez, "SPAM's carbon footprint," poets.org, 2010, <https://poets.org/poem/spams-carbon-footprint>.

another, it is not unreasonable to argue that there existed a larger proportion of vulnerable and at-risk locals on Guam in comparison to those aboard the *USS Roosevelt*. With almost 200,000 residents on island, the Pacific Island Times processed census data to determine there was such an enormous increase in Guam's 75 and older population, it constituted a "senior tsunami."²¹ In comparison, the concerns aboard Crozier's massive warship are meager.

Whilst this massive warship carries mostly able-bodied servicemen and women, Guam's local community retains a way larger proportion of vulnerable and at-risk community members. This is not to be taken as one person's life meaning more in relation to their occupation, but rather the minimization of harm and death caused to both communities. Doing more for these sailors than their own institution, the island provided lodging in hotels whilst also trying to protect their own from contracting the virus. Infamous for its lackluster healthcare, prior to the pandemic ailing family members in need of serious medical attention were shipped off to Hawai'i, the Philippines, or even California for treatment. Imagine how this reality was even more warped given locals, especially Chamorros, tend to work in tourism. For those who work as cleaners, they were the closest in contact with covid positive sailors quarantining in the hotels they serviced. As a clear-cut example of this unbalanced relation between Guam and U.S. entities like the military and government at large, it is truly heartbreaking to witness this

²¹ Theodore Lewis, "Prepare for a 'very senior tsunami'," *Pacific Island Times*, published February 5th, 2020, last updated January 6th, 2021, [https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2020/02/05/prepare-for-a-very-senior-tsunami#:~:text=Between%20the%20census%20of%202%2C000,3%2C135\)%%20from%202000%20to%202010.&text=The%202020%20census%20will%20show,of%20these%20higher%20age%20groups.](https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2020/02/05/prepare-for-a-very-senior-tsunami#:~:text=Between%20the%20census%20of%202%2C000,3%2C135)%%20from%202000%20to%202010.&text=The%202020%20census%20will%20show,of%20these%20higher%20age%20groups.)

in real time. To this day, it is still hard for me to fathom the depths of my sorrow for all the lives lost to COVID-19, police brutality, racism, and other startling but unsurprising traumas of 2020. In developing my own ways of coping with this harrowing, but hopeful world, I just try to remind myself that it is okay to sit with that grief and wonder where we go from here. In order to hold righteous space in our hearts rather than resentment, we must remind ourselves that another world is possible. It is only possible if we dare to invest in its potential and know that we may not see it in our lifetimes, but it will be worth it. For future generations, for the earth, for the sake of all those who fought the good fight before us. Another world is possible. It has to be.

Liberation Day 2019 as My Entry Point to Independent Guåhan

The final Chamorro activist group up for discussion is Independent Guåhan. My first encounter with Independent Guåhan was through Michael Lujan Bevacqua. It's July 21st, 2019 and I decided to take up my Nina Becki on her offer to attend the Liberation Day festivities for the first, and foreseeably my last, time. More than once, I wondered why I said yes despite my entire family foretelling the heat and humidity; they clearly did not want to be there either but entertained my curiosity, nonetheless. Ultimately, I am glad I went. As row after row after row of endless military personnel march with guns, smiling and waving to Chamorro families barbecuing under canopies and returning the favor, it was the most surreal experience. American and Guam flags abound, the processional floats were decorated to represent each village and also served as reminder of the holiday's historical trend from fervent American patriotism to increasing

Chamorro pride.²² In an unorthodox way, both sentiments found expression at the Liberation Day Parade of 2019. Walking down the endless stretch of Marine Drive, I saw a friendly and familiar face: Professor Bevacqua. Sticking out like a sore thumb, Miget's tent for Independent Guåhan received mixed reviews from passersby. For me, it was like a breath of fresh air. From bumper stickers to informational pamphlets, this was grassroots organizing in action. Although bold to show up at a pro-American event, it was the kind of risk that might still pay off. At the very least, I knew I wasn't the only one deeply uncomfortable with Guam's highly militarized state and hoping another political status was possible.

As a truly multi-faceted organization, it would be more helpful to identify what Independent Guåhan does not do than what programs and services they do offer. Per their Facebook photo album sets, the group has a varied history in holding rallies, teach-ins, debates, musical concerts, solidarity events, conferences, and a podcast; you name it, Independent Guåhan has probably done it.²³ In October 2017, the largest delegation of Chamorro petitioners presented their positions at the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. With the Fourth Committee's focus in special political issues and decolonization, they all ventured forth in hopes of receiving institutional support for the Chamorro people of Guam. In addition to Governor Calvo and three other Chamorro public officials, the other 14 attendees were activists and academics involved with the

²² Keith Camacho, "From Processions to Parades," *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands*, Pacific Islands Monograph Series 25 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 83-109.

²³ Independent Guåhan. "All Albums," @independentgu, *Facebook*, dates varied, https://www.facebook.com/independentgu/photos/?tab=album&ref=page_internal.

group Independent Guåhan. In fighting for Chamorro sovereignty, this collective front attested to the seriousness from which organizers took this opportunity. For attendee Melvin Won Pat-Borja, a hip-hop artist, slam poet, and spoken word poet, “it really sends a strong message to the body that it’s not just a group of random people who are coming to speak in favor of decolonization, but that our elected officials are on board with this project, this push as well. So, it was a really nice experience for us.”²⁴ Setting the precedent for these international appeals, OPI-R’s penchant for providing testimony at the UN found a legacy in groups like Independent Guåhan. In light of other activist organizations whose sole purpose may center on preventing one event or another from taking place, Independent Guåhan’s longevity lay in its overarching aim of independence.

Connecting with the People in a Virtual Landscape: Pre and Post COVID Outbreak

Since its inception in 2016, Independent Guåhan has been both accessible and well-versed in cultivating virtual connection and navigating social media. From its Fanachu! Podcast to its fervent usage of Facebook, the organization’s propensity to share online proved especially vital in 2020. In a covid-stricken world, Independent Guåhan proved more prepared for transition than its local leaders. By moving its general assembly meetings to a virtual platform via Facebook live, the group was able to reach more people. From those living on island to those in diaspora, anyone and everyone interested in working towards Guam’s decolonization could join in that process.

²⁴ Rebecca Elmore, “Independent Guåhan reports back on historic UN trip,” *Pacific News Center Guam*, October 26th, 2017, <https://www.pncguam.com/independent-guahan-reports-back-on-historic-un-trip/>.

In its efforts of promoting the Chamorro language, Independent Guåhan also found tangential success in the work of Miget. Miget, also known as Michael Lujan Bevaqua, formerly referred to as Professor Bevacqua. Although formerly referred to as Professor Bevacqua thus far, his transition away from academia towards other avenues shall be reflected by this change in naming.²⁵ A perpetual activist, Miget is a key member and one of several co-founders of Independent Guåhan. Occurring simultaneous to his work with this group, he also founded The Guam Bus in 2016. As a creative collective on Guam, their mission is “to revitalize the Chamoru language and empower the Chamoru people... to inspire and educate the Chamoru people about their heritage and future possibilities as a people.”²⁶ In catering to their community, The Guam Bus sells children’s books, comic books, flashcards as well as clothing and stickers.

In his free time pre-covid, Miget’s tendency was to conduct Chamorro lessons in coffee shops and other public spaces. Due to the pandemic, he started hosting free online Chamoru lessons which gained attendance from Chamorros on and off island. Regarded as priceless in its intrinsic importance to Guam’s Indigenous culture, language learners who did not grow up learning their language hoped to give their children the gift of their Native language instead of struggling as they did to regain it. In a case of diaspora blues alleviated by Miget’s lessons, one language learner, Alex White, was able to engage with his father in a whole new way: “It’s made a part of him come alive that kind of has been

²⁵ I requested permission to reference him as “Miget” moving forward in my thesis; he responded, “Hunggan that would be fine with me” via Instagram, direct message, April 15th, 2021, 9:00 PST.

²⁶ “Our Mission,” *The Guam Bus*, accessed April 15th, 2021, <https://www.theguambus.com/>.

buried for like 60 years... I feel this enormous hope.”²⁷ For my friend and fellow Sagehen Aidan Moore (PO '20), participation in the program sparked joy within his family. In the words of his mom, Patricia Beuke, “To connect to my culture and my heritage and being able to pass down a legacy to my children... [is] Part of being a good ancestor.”²⁸ For Miget, teaching mitigated this generational gap in Chamorro language knowledge and usage. Moreover, he could share the pride and joy he felt speaking with his family and friends in Chamorro with others in the community. Affirmed by the experiences of these participants, revitalization of one’s Indigenous language, albeit strenuous work, proved well worth it. In his multiple capacities, Miget displayed a commonality within Chamorro activist circles. With so many individuals devoted to the cause, they would often invest their time and energy into multiple organizations. Akin to Hope Cristobal’s involvement in PARA-PADA and OPI-R, Miget found solace through his work with Independent Guåhan and The Guam Bus.

Art as an Indigenous Futurism

Coming home in 2006, Julian Aguon entered the opening fray of Guam’s proposed military build-up. To ward against complacent or desolate views about the island’s future, Aguon emphasized the political potential of art. From chanting to remembering one’s history, his definition of art was expansive enough to envision new worlds. In his yearlong absence from Guam, the writer and eventual lawyer recognized,

²⁷ Jerick Sablan, “The future of the island is linked to the future of the CHamoru language and culture,” *Pacific Daily News*, April 18th, 2021, <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2021/04/07/guams-future-linked-chamoru-language-and-culture/7041071002/>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

“that the real war to be waged here is one for our people’s attention.”²⁹ For Chamorro activists, their role lay in garnering awareness but ultimately it was the responsibility of the artist to make a statement worthy of such conscious observation. In order to contest the complex and convoluted history of Guam’s political status, activism must point the finger at the unreciprocated nature of the island’s relationship to the United States. From there, the artist’s work would lead to provocation and, hopefully, righteous action. To do so, it should meet this criterion: “Art that is worthy of our people must equip us with a fresh capacity to have more frank and loving conversations with each other as well as the humility to stay in it. It must help us live, and re-create community, polity, and power.”³⁰

In refining his approach to art, Chamorro scholar and chant leader Leonard Iriarte emphasized the importance of refrain and delivery. Although initially wary, I was able to interview Leonard thanks to a family friend connection. Invited to interview during a group chanting session, I was witnessing I Fanlalai’an in action. Meaning “The Place of Chant” in Chamorro, this non-profit organization works towards preserving and building upon a traditional repository of archaic language and historical information, in the forms of chant, ceremonial recitation, and ritualized verse” for the purpose of revitalizing and perpetuating the Indigenous components of Chamorro language and culture.³¹ So as to avoid the blow of the conch shell inside the classroom or to evade the blistering heat outside, Leonard was very intentional during this back-and-forth migration. Privy to the

²⁹ Julian Aguon, “Coming Home,” *Just Left of the Setting Sun* (Tokyo: blue ocean press, 2006), 69.

³⁰ Aguon, 66.

³¹ I Fanlalai’an [@ifanlalaian]. “I Fanlalai’an (The Place of Chant) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization and perpetuation of the indigenous elements of the CHamoru language.” Instagram photo, April 18th, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CNzeQJ0Hz0q/>.

inner workings of performance art on island, Leonard expressed his learned hesitation when it came to not only engaging with other groups but giving public performances. In minimizing the group's exposure, Leonard opted instead to listen and learn. In deciding the position of I Fanlalai'an to the raising of collective Chamorro consciousness, he remarked, "all the cultural practitioners are seeking some form of cultural authority... we watch what they do, helps us to gauge the development in the modern community, how well they understand their history and culture, [and] where do we need to apply our influence."³² This logic, which Leonard refers to as cultural trouble-shooting, largely informs how the group navigates public demonstrations as well as the people who gravitate to their specific beliefs and methodologies. In seeking to inform the future through ancient ways of thinking and chanting, this group was also simultaneously aware of the present circumstances and demands of the modern era. Esoteric, I Fanlalai'an is one highly specialized form of art which evokes the past whilst occurring in the present.

Aside from history, perhaps the most essential art form in its ability to provoke thought and inspire action is that of poetry. From Kathy Jetnil-Kijner to Terisa Siagatonu, Pasifika poetry has found a real sweet spot in mobilizing their respective Indigenous communities to not only feel the poet's pain but see their place in it. For Craig Santos Perez, a phenomenal poet in his own right, committing to this art form required a serious assessment of personal passion and purpose. As a Chamorro environmentalist, his poetry acts an homage to those who came before him, those who have to endure white tears and

³² Leonard Iriarte, interview by author, Mangilao, July 20th, 2019.

other colonial byproducts alongside him,³³ and future recipients of this earth we call home. For Craig, his poetry is an expression of self, protestation against U.S. imperialism, and prodding of the audience to either change or continue to meet cultural values. In his view of what it means to be a modern Chamorro,

“The most important things to carry forth are our cultural values, you know, things like inafamaolek, that idea that we’re all connected; it’s not only people, the living and the dead are ancestors both, also the earth is connected... that is such a beautiful idea. It’s an idea you see in a lot of indigenous cultures, it just has different names. When we think of it that way, we have to think of everything we do will affect other people, will affect the ancestors, will affect future generations because we’re all connected. And so we have to really act with more entropy and act sustainably and act with care.”³⁴

Through his brand of ecopoetry, this poet-activist blends the personal with the political in pieces as well as the global impact of climate change on all of us (human, animal, or otherwise). From his spoken word poetry to his recent publication, *Habitat Threshold* (2020), he regularly remarks on environmental racism through intertwining this concern for environmental destruction with matters of racial and cultural injustice. In knowing his talent and pursuing this path, Craig is able to reflect the struggles of our Chamorro community amongst other things. Moreover, he is the co-founded of Ala Press, the only publisher in the United States dedicated to Pacific literature, and the co-editor of five anthologies of Pacific literature and eco-literature. Beyond his personal poetic endeavors, Craig has been instrumental in widening the window of opportunity for Pacific Islander poets to share their stories as well. Reflecting one of his many chosen art forms in its connection to activism as well as hope for mobilization, he ponders,

“What can I do?... Maybe literature can move people in that way.”³⁵

³³ Craig Santos Perez, “‘This Changes Everything’ (Earth Day Poem),” personal website, April 22nd, 2018, <https://craigsantosperez.wordpress.com/2018/04/22/this-changes-everything-earth-day-poem/>.

³⁴ Craig Santos Perez, interview conducted by author, June 28th, 2019.

³⁵ Ibid.

In this way, art is one valuable vehicle in its capacity to either reflect or stimulate its audience. For Leonard and Craig, they have found countless intersectional of engaging with their Chamorro identity, personal interests, and hope of assembling both Chamorros and non-Chamorros in protecting Guam’s indigenous language, culture, history, and environment. Activists with a long history of political engagement, Leonard Iriarte and Craig Santos Perez center their creativity through their organizational efforts and desire to share their passions.

The Long Trek Ahead: Political Sovereignty

In summation, the history of Guam’s political status is still undecided. In terms of state recognition, no substantial support has been made by U.S. or UN authorities beyond the very recent claim of no “free, prior and informed” consent afforded to Chamorros by the U.N. Human Rights Council.³⁶ Albeit a significant step towards Guam’s sovereignty, it is still symbolic in nature. When confronted with 100+ years of struggle for true self-governance and sovereignty, this truth attests less to the righteous work of Chamorro activism and more so to American empire and its prioritization of national defense.

From Chapter 1, this penchant for self-governance and local leadership was first revealed at the turn of the 20th century. With the departure of the vanquished Spanish administration as well as triumphant American authorities, the people of Guam found themselves at a crossroads. In telling the oft-forgotten story of the fight for acting

³⁶ Anumita Kaur, “U.N. Human Rights Council: No ‘free, prior and informed’ consent for buildup,” *Pacific Daily News*, March 31st, 2021, <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2021/03/31/human-rights-council-no-free-prior-and-informed-consent-buildup/4815457001/>.

governorship between Francisco Paul Martinez Portusach and Jose Sisto Rodrigo, the complexity of racial, social, and political affairs on island. Guided by my own scouring of the internet, I claim Portusach was not Spanish but a Spanish settler with developed ties to the island and its people. I wondered whether he has Chamorro, but my query was left inconclusive. However, the idea of Francisco, or rather “Frank,” Portusach as a simple Spaniard who became American and then wound up on Guam is highly fictitious. Attesting to his personal connections and acceptance within the community, Portusach not only becomes a member of local leadership but worked heavily alongside Chamorro elite. In exerting agency through collectivity, this inner circle sought to increase Chamorro self-governance prior to an era that would prove to be the exact opposite. Until the appointment of Governor Joseph Flores (1960-1961), there would not be another Chamorro governor, acting or otherwise, after 1898 for several decades. Constituting a turning point, its culmination and aftermath also came into question. Through deployment of Indigenous futurisms, this period of political flux presented possibilities for what Guam could have been. Rather than remain stuck in the past, utilization of this theory also serves as a reminder that Chamorros had always exhibited an interest in achieving their own sovereignty. Despite the odds stacked against them, they persisted well into the beginning and throughout the 20th century.

In Chapter 2, I felt compelled to provide a thorough contextual analysis of mid-century Guam. Although I fully argue Chamorro contention with Guam’s political status is rooted primarily in 1898, there are certain legacies and nuances of this inbetween period that I wanted to make note of. Without it, the thematic and teleological jump from

chapter 1 to chapter 3 would have been too drastic and rather confusing. In order to establish what circumstances Chamorro activists found themselves in during the late 20th century, its preceding history must also be explained in full. Whether the reader is familiar or not with what happened on Guam at this time, it felt important to include this history and reframe it with new understandings of the “liberation” narrative and modernization as well as the growing industries of the military and tourism on island. Although events like World War II or processes like that of modernization were global phenomena, their impact on Guam entailed specificities quite unique to the island and its people. If I could have added anything else to this chapter, it would be an extensive acknowledgment as to why Chamorro activism heightened decades after the Civil Rights Movement and other ethnic movements on Turtle Island, given Guam is intimately connected to the U.S. given its territorial status. In my discussions with Dr. Alfred Peredo Flores, a large part as to why resulted from travel restrictions which were only lifted in the 1960’s. Supposedly, the people of Guam were unable to leave Guam and others were not allowed to come, unless of course they were military officials. In turn, I think this factor would have really elucidated how and why Chamorros ran on island time when it came to protesting, organizing, and mobilizing on a grander scale in the 20th century. For the latter portion of this chapter, there is an overview of early Chamorro activism via Para’Pada Y CHamorus. Also known as PARA PADA, this group was one of the most preeminent groups to navigate formal organizing and grassroots activism on Guam. This was no small feat, especially when it came to challenging established institutions like the Pacific Daily News and Washington-mandated constructions like a Constitution. Because of their successful efforts at language revitalization, majority of the PDN articles I

reference in towards the end are written by Chamorro reporters. Due to their deterrment of the Guam Constitution, the people of Guam did not find themselves in legally binding contract guaranteeing further docility. Instead, this legacy of fighting for what you want in all its stipulations carried on.

In terms of my penultimate chapter, I trace the contours of two particular organizations, OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru, through a model of compare and contrast. In doing so, the evolution of Chamorro activism during the late 20th century may appear binary. Rather than cast them as polar opposites, I utilize this framework to draw lines of distinction between each group in order to understand the convergence of their methods and beliefs. Despite navigating different forums and forms of demonstration, both groups shared vast similarities and embodied various aspects of Chamorro culture. Articulating divergent visions of Chamorro futurity, they represented a generational divide on the validity of ideas like state recognition, reputation, radicalism, racism, comprise and concession. In spite of their differences, both organizations were extremely collaborative. Since their separate inceptions, they were welcoming to non-Native peoples. With local settler allies as members of these collectives, their role represented the reciprocal nature of intercultural relationships necessary for Indigenous sovereignty. In their efforts towards connecting with other peoples, there was special interest in sharing solidarity with other Indigenous peoples as well. With other Pacific Islanders and Native peoples of Turtle Island, OPI-R and Nasion Chamoru engaged in Trans-Indigenous recognitions. Such work was invested in mutual care and benefit, which still continues on to this day.

In conclusion, this thesis is anything but perfect. In fact, history itself is an imperfect task. If I could have done anything differently, I would have included a gendered analysis of cultural sovereignty. Given Guam's matrilineal society, it is quite remarkable the respect afforded to Chamorro women and the resistance they exerted to colonial powers through their ways of knowing and being. If we were not in a pandemic, I surely would have incorporated feminist interventions made by Chamorro scholars like Christine Taitano Delisle, Anne Perez Hattori, and Laura Torres Souder. As for now, I look forward to writing on this sometime in the future. Beyond the faults of my scholarship, I feel glad and grateful I had so much material to even be able to tell this history. I recognize how fortunate I was to be able to conduct research prior to the pandemic and return back home to Guam at all. To understand this deep-seated gratitude, I recommend reading Craig Santos Perez' poem "Off Island Chamorros."³⁷ More than my solitary efforts of encapsulating this rich history, I am proud to say the history of Chamorro activism is still alive and well. Despite the ongoing stalemate of political progress, it is beautiful and reassuring to know Chamorros endlessly embody sovereignty in their own creative and cultural ways. For me, history was one entry point to which I could observe and hopefully contribute to preserving our people's stories.

With the distinct pleasure and privilege of listening to so many life stories, my proudest achievement of this enormous body of work is the incorporation of my oral history interviews. In talking story, the importance of remembering and centering our histories remained at the forefront of my mind. Besides asking "What does Chamorro mean to you?" my other favorite question to ask my interviewees was "Can you envision

³⁷ Craig Santos Perez, "Off-Island Chamorros," *Wordpress* website, July 25th, 2017, <https://craigsantosperez.wordpress.com/2017/07/25/off-island-chamorros/>.

Guam without the military or tourism?” Each response was quite forward-thinking and realistic; in opting for eco-tourism, many would prefer to relinquish ties with the military. For one person, these ideas were incomprehensible because it was all she had known. In hoping to share the radical optimism Indigenous futurisms offered me, I responded, “Why not? Our ancestors lived through 300 years of Spanish colonialism, and yet, here we are.” In this way, Indigenous futurisms allows us to reexamine what we know and think about they world, our place in it, and apply the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors in how to address our current and future problems. More than anything, it gives me hope. Although the road ahead is long and extends far beyond the horizon, the history of Chamorro fights for sovereignty extends back even farther. Through the endless, intergenerational work of Chamorro activists, political sovereignty is still a possibility worth fighting for and may very well come sooner than we ourselves may anticipate. Let us not act in fear but instead opt for freedom. Biba Guahan! Biba CHamoru!

P.S. Acknowledgment of Chamorro Activism in its Moves towards Solidarity

Albeit this section will be significantly condensed in comparison to the rest of this concluding chapter, I would be remiss to not mention the many ways Chamorro activist groups and peoples offered their solidarity to other issues plaguing several communities beyond Guam. Solidarity, which means a feeling or action shared amongst individuals with a common goal or interest, also took root in Guam’s modern day protest culture. Marches of solidarity for the Black Lives Movement and for Mauna Kea attested to this. Given the island’s own history of systemic racism against its Native inhabitants and others, there was a thorough line of connection felt deeply by many living on Guam.

In organizing a last minute but surprisingly successful BLM protest on island, organizer Lani Reyes said, “it demonstrates how much people recognize that systemic racism is a real problem in the U.S. especially, but also worldwide. That carries over into policing... And if there’s anything we can do, it’s to help out in giving to those who have been unjustly murdered by police for their skin color.”³⁸ In taking this issue to heart, the Black Lives Matter movement also pushed Guam’s local community to confront their own anti-Blackness. Given Guam’s primary exposure to Black people comes from the presence of Black members of the military, there is a lot to be done in terms of ameliorating ethnic relations on Guam. To understand the tension and discomfort associated with this history, I recommend reading “Black Lives Matter in the Pacific.”³⁹ As for Mauna Kea, the apparent parallels in their shared struggle towards self-determination and protection of sacred sites necessitated efforts of solidarity. According to a Chamorro protest participant, “It really hits home close for us because we see a lot of similarities in regard to what is happening at Litekyan and what the Kanaka Maoli people are saying is—you know—this land is sacred, enough is enough, we have given up enough of our culture, now we have to take a stand for Mauna Kea.”⁴⁰ Words will never be enough to encapsulate the beauty and power behind these demonstrations so I leave you with pictures taken of various Chamorro protests over the course of 2020 and 2021.

³⁸ Jerick Sablan, “Black Lives Matter protests held, planned,” *Pacific Daily News*, published June 2nd, 2020, <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2020/06/02/black-lives-matter-protests-held-planned/5314520002/>.

³⁹ Craig Santos Perez, “Black Lives Matter in the Pacific,” *Ethnic Studies Review*, 2020.

⁴⁰ Losinio, Louella. “Prutehi Litekyan holds ‘wave’ in solidarity with Mauna Kea Protest,” *Pacific News Center Guam*, July 23rd, 2019, <https://www.pncguam.com/prutehi-litekyan-holds-wave-in-solidarity-with-mauna-kea-protest/>.



2.0 Prutehi Litekyan and Independent Guahan Protest Poster, various online platforms, posted October 31st, 2018.



2.1 Prutehi Litekyan Protest Poster, various online platforms, posted on June 23rd, 2020.



2.2 BLM Protest on Guam, Protestors surround Chief Kepuha statue posters in hand⁴¹



2.3 BLM Protest on Guam, Black woman holding up protest poster about racism on Guam, photo by Johanna Salinas, June 6th, 2020.⁴²

⁴¹ Dill Pickles, “Pretty cool seeing the support for human rights. End racial violence now,” Twitter, June 5th, 2020, 12:58 am PST, <https://twitter.com/dillp671/status/1268814560242176002>.

⁴² Johanna Salinas, “Racism: Guam has its own stories to tell, protestors say,” *Pacific Island Times*, June 6th, 2020, <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2020/06/06/racism-guam-has-its-own-stories-to-tell-protestors-say>.



2.4 Mauna Kea-Litekyan Solidarity Wave organized by Prutehi Litekyan, Facebook, July 24th, 2019.



2.5 Mauna-Kea Solidarity Wave, Facebook, July 24th, 2019.



2.6 Fonohge: March for CHamoru Self-Determination, Facebook, September 2nd, 2019.



2.7 Prutehi Litekyan/Magua' Demonstration, Facebook, July 18th, 2020.

*Images 2.4-2.7 were taken by Michael Lujan Bevacqua, also known as Miget, and uploaded to Independent Guahan's Facebook profile.

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